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MOTHER'S TRUE STORIES.

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FOR THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL SOCIETY.
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MOTHER'S TRUE STORIES.

CHAPTER I.

It was the twilight of a short day in early winter, when Mrs. Ellis entered the room where her two children had been playing. Little Mary jumped up from her seat, exclaiming:—

"Dear mother, we were wishing you would come! We are tired of playing, and have been telling stories to each other. Georgie has been telling me a

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true one, mother; we like true stories so much the best."

"And what true story has he been telling you?" asked her mother.

"One that you told him a little while ago, about two people who lived in a beautiful garden; and he says that you know a great many such stories; that you have learned them out of that great book you read every morning."

"Yes, mother," interrupted George, "the Bible, you know; and we want you to tell some of them to us; will you, mamma? I have been telling Mary all about Adam and Eve."

"I am glad, Georgie, that you remember so well what I have told you. Yes, I can repeat many such stories out of

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the Bible; and I do not wonder that you like true stories best. It is so much pleasanter, when we hear anything, to think, 'All this really happened,' than to have to say to ourselves, 'None of this is true; nobody ever did so.'"

"I think so too, mother," answered the wise little George; "and now, while it is so dark that you cannot read nor sew, will you tell us one of these stories?"

Mrs. Ellis smiled, and, sitting down by the fire, she took Mary, the youngest, in her lap, while George was not long in placing a stool at her feet for his own convenience, where, as he said, he could look right up in her face, and she began her story.

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"A great while ago, there were not near so many people in the world as there are now, but almost every one was wicked. Men used to do just as they pleased; and there was nothing heard but quarrelling and fighting. There was one good old man, however, who never did such things. It grieved him to see how wicked his neighbors were; and he would try to persuade them to do better, but they did not mind him. He and his family used to keep themselves apart from these bad men; and although they were the only ones who did right, while others laughed at and mocked them, they still worshipped God and obeyed his laws.

"At last God told this good man,

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that there would soon be a great flood to drown all these wicked men. He told him to build a large vessel, so that, when the flood came, he and his family might be saved in it.

"People did not go to sea then, as they do now; and this may have been the first vessel ever built. It was not a ship, but rather a huge floating house, having no masts nor sails, for it was merely intended to float on top of the water.

"So Noah, for that was the old man's name, set to work to make this great vessel. It took many years to build it, and all the while he preached to the people, trying to make them repent of their sins; but they only laughed at

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him, and would not believe what he said of the great deluge which was coming.

"So Noah quietly finished his vessel, and put provisions into it, and collected some living animals to take with him; for of course such a flood would drown the beasts as well as the men. God had directed him to save a pair of each kind of creature; and to save more than two of the most useful animals, such as sheep and oxen.

"At last it began to rain violently, and Noah, with his family and all the creatures, went into the ark, as it is called, and shut the door. Then how it rained! for more than a month it poured constantly; while all the rivers

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overflowed, and the waves of the sea rose over the land, and buried everything under the water."

"O mother," said little Mary, "was everybody else drowned?"

"Yes, Mary, everybody who lived, except the eight who were in the ark. This great vessel floated on the water, rising higher and higher as the water rose. One day, as they looked out, the family of Noah could see the tops of the trees above the waves, but the next day they were hidden, and at last not even the summits of the mountains could be seen."

"How long did the flood last, mother?"

"About six months. Then the water

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began to run off into the sea again, and the ark sank down and settled upon the side of a hill. Then Noah took one of the birds he had in the ark, — a raven, — and, opening a window, let him fly. The raven never came back, for such birds eat the flesh of dead animals, and he found plenty of food. Then Noah let out a beautiful dove; but doves do not eat such food as ravens do, and the poor dove soon came flying back for Noah to take her into the ark again.

"After a few days, he sent her out a second time, and, as she flew over the water, she saw an olive-tree putting out its green leaves, and looking fresh and spring-like. This dear little dove was so glad to see the leaves again, that she

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plucked one off, and flew back to Noah with it; as much as to say, 'The flood is over: see this beautiful green leaf!'

"So he knew the water was almost gone. He waited some time longer, and when the ground was dry enough, he and all his household came out into the fresh air, and rejoiced to see the new grass and flowers, and to feel safe after that terrible storm."

"What became of the little dove?" asked Mary.

"O, she only stayed with Noah a few days after she brought the olive-leaf, and then she flew away, and built a nest in one of the trees, I suppose. Noah and his family were very grateful to God for saving their lives all that long time,

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and for making the earth so beautiful again."

"Were they not afraid that the water would come back again and drown them?" said George. "I should have wanted to live on one of the highest mountains, for fear it should."

"They would have been afraid," answered his mother, "but God promised them he never would send another flood; and he showed them a beautiful rainbow in the clouds, telling them to remember his promise whenever they saw a rainbow.

"Do you recollect, children, that splendid bow we saw last summer after the thunder-shower, when we were at the seaside?"

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"O yes!" cried little Mary.

"How beautiful it was!" added George; "you know, mother, it seemed to arch right over the ocean, and one end looked as if it stood in the waves. Did you think of the flood when you saw it?"

"Yes, Georgie, I always think of God's promise when I see a rainbow; and I love to thank him for saving us from such dreadful storms and floods as the one I have been telling you about.

"But it is now time for candles; perhaps to-morrow I will tell you another true story."

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CHAPTER II.

It was scarcely dark the next afternoon, when Mrs. Ellis was eagerly reminded by her children of the expected story. As they drew her to the fire, and took their places to listen, George began with an important question.

"Mamma, you were telling us yesterday about Noah; where did he live? It was not in this country, was it?"

"No, my dear, I do not believe anybody lived in this country then. Noah lived in Asia, and it was there that the

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Deluge took place. I will show you to-morrow on your map exactly where he lived, — in the western part of Asia; and all the people I shall tell you about lived either in Asia or in Egypt, which you remember is in the northern part of Africa.

"You shall hear to-night of a very good man indeed, named Abraham. He always tried to do what he knew to be right; and to obey the commands of God. When he was living with his father and all his family, a voice from Heaven bade him go and live in another country, far from his friends; he did not hesitate a moment, for he knew that whatever God commands is best for us; so he went away, with his wife, and lived in the land pointed out to him.

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"I cannot tell you how many times he obeyed this heavenly voice, even when it was very hard to do so; but one time was the hardest of all. He had a son named Isaac, a good child, whom he loved dearly; but God commanded him to take this son of his, and to go to a mountain at some distance, and there offer him up for a burnt-offering."

"A burnt-offering, mamma!" said George; "what is that?"

"In those times, my dear, people did not have churches as we do, where we go to worship God; they used to build altars, and burn something that they valued upon them, as an acknowledgment that all they had came from God, and was to be used in his service.

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Every summer, for instance, they brought the first fruits which ripened, and the first corn, and offered it up to God as a thank-offering. Their principal riches were sheep and cattle; and very often they would kill a lamb or a kid, and burn it on an altar, praying and giving thanks to God."

"But did God tell Abraham to kill his little boy?" asked Mary, in a tone of distress.

"God did it to prove Abraham's obedience, Mary. As if I should tell you to do some very hard thing, knowing that, if you loved me truly, you would obey. If Abraham was willing to sacrifice his darling child, it was a proof that he would do anything, however

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hard, that God commanded him. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, mamma; but did he do it?"

"It was in the night that Abraham heard the command. Rising early in the morning, he called his son Isaac, and two servants; he saddled an ass, and, taking some wood to build a fire, he set out for the mountain, without telling any one what he was going to do. He was so sorrowful that he could not bear to speak of the voice he had heard, and he hoped that God in some way would save his child.

"When they came near the mountain, he told the servants to wait with the ass, while he and the boy went to worship. So he gave the wood to Isaac

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to carry, and taking a knife and a lighted torch in his hand, they went on together up the mountain. After walking a little way, Isaac said:

"'Father, here is the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?'

"Abraham answered, 'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.'

"When they came to the place, he built an altar of stones, laid the wood on it, and, putting Isaac on the wood, took up the knife to slay his son.

"Just then an angel called to him from heaven, and bade him stop! O how glad Abraham was to hear that word, and to know that God did not

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intend he should truly put his boy to death!

"The angel told him that, since he had not hesitated to give up his darling child to God, he would bless him all his life, and make him happy; and that his son too should be blessed. Then Abraham, looking round, saw a sheep caught in some bushes; so he took that and sacrificed it for a burnt-offering, giving many thanks to God."

"I am very glad he did not kill him," said little Mary, half crying. "How happy Isaac must have been to get home to his mother again!"

"Now, children," said their mother, "cannot you think of one thing we may learn from this story? God sometimes

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requires us to give up what we love, because he sees that it is best we should part with it. If we are like Abraham, how shall we feel then ?"

"We shall be ready to give it up to God, I suppose, mother," said George.

"Do you remember going with me last summer, Georgie, to see that poor woman whose little baby had just died ? You know that, though she said she missed it dreadfully, she added: 'It is all right; God's will be done!' and spoke cheerfully about it. Was she not like good Abraham ?"

"Yes, mamma; God asked her for one of her children, and she gave it to him."

"She resigned it to him without com-

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plaining, and God must have blessed her for it, as he did his servant so long ago.

"I must leave you now until tea-time, children; but I want you to think about this story, and how we can be like Abraham, even when we are not called to give up what we love."

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CHAPTER III.

THE next evening, when their mother came into the nursery, and the children took their places by her side, George began: —

"I suppose, mamma, we can be like Abraham by always doing what God wishes us to do."

"Yes, Georgie; he knows exactly what is best for us to do, and he tells us in the Bible what that is; and if we love him, and believe in him, as Abraham did, we shall obey. I will give you an example of what I mean.

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"God knows that, if children or men indulge unkind feelings toward each other, these feelings will increase; leading to hatred, and to great wickedness, and will cause unhappiness and misery. So the Bible says: 'Little children, love one another.' 'Be kindly affectioned one to the other, with brotherly love.' If we obey God, then, we never shall allow any unkindness in our hearts. The story I am going to tell you to-night, shows how fast such evil passions grow.

"There were once twelve brothers living together with their father. Their father was quite old, and though he loved them all, and was kind to them, there was one named Joseph, whom he loved the best.

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"Joseph was the youngest but one, and was a very good son; but the older ones were envious of him, because they said he was the favorite.

"One day his father gave him a beautiful coat, prettier than any that the others had; and this made them very angry, so that the story says 'they could not speak peaceably to him,' but every time they were together, they would taunt him, and try to make him unhappy. This grew worse and worse, until they really hated him.

"At one time the older ones were feeding their sheep at some distance from home, when his father called Joseph, and told him to go to find his brothers, and bring home news of them.

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"Joseph went directly. It was some time before he came where they were; but when they saw him, they said: 'See, here is the favorite; let us kill him, and get rid of him.' One or two of them, however, were not prepared for such wickedness, though they too wished never to see him again; so they consulted together, and decided to sell Joseph to some travelling merchants who were passing by."

"Poor Joseph!" said Mary; "why did he not run away home, mother?"

"He would have been very glad to escape when he heard their fierce words, but they let him down into a pit for safe keeping while they talked about getting rid of him. He cried bitterly,

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JOSEPH SOLD TO THE EGYPTIANS. P. 24.

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and begged them not to sell him for a slave, but let him go home to his dear father; but they were so cruel as not to mind his prayers."

"O mother!" cried George, "starting up from his seat, "how awfully wicked! How could they do so? What did their father say when they told him?"

"They were afraid to tell him what they had done; so they made a lie to hide their other sins. They brought home poor Joseph's coat, and told their father that they had not seen the boy, but had found his coat all bloody, and they supposed some wild beasts had killed him."

"Where were the merchants going, mamma?"

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"Across the desert to Egypt. They sold Joseph to an officer of the king, named Potiphar, who at first treated him kindly, but afterwards suspected him of some crime that he did not commit, and put him in prison, where he stayed for two or three years."

"How he must have hated his cruel brothers!" said George, still excited.

"No, my dear, he was too good and affectionate for that. He lived long before Jesus Christ came and taught us to love our enemies, and do good to them that hate us; but he acted as if he had learned these blessed rules.

"I cannot tell you now all that happened to Joseph in Egypt. After a while, he was taken out of prison, and,

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obtaining favor with the king, he was raised to high offices of trust, until he became the greatest man in Egypt, except the king himself. But he never forgot his brothers and his kind old father, and often he longed to hear from them. Nor did he forget what his father had taught him of God; but always tried to obey him, refusing decidedly to do anything displeasing to him.

"At last there was a great famine, both in Egypt and in Canaan, where Joseph's father lived; and his ten elder brothers came to Egypt to buy corn. For Joseph had provided great quantities of grain in storehouses, during the years before the famine, and now he

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sold it for the king to everybody who needed it. The ten brothers inquired where they could buy food, and the Egyptians directed them to Joseph, the governor.

"They had never heard from him since they sold him, and of course never expected to find him so high in power, and surrounded by servants; besides this, he spoke a different language now, and the Egyptians called him by a different name; so it is no wonder that his brothers did not know Joseph. He knew them, however, as soon as he saw them, and was very much affected; but he did not at first tell them who he was. He asked them about their family, as if they had been strangers; and when

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they said they had a younger brother at home, he told them to bring him with them the next time they came. Then he supplied them with corn, and sent them home, giving them back the price they had paid him.

"When their corn was all gone, they told their father that they must go and buy some more, and asked him to let Benjamin, his youngest son, go with them.

"Their father, since he had lost Joseph, was afraid to let Benjamin go out of his sight, and at first he refused. But they said: 'The Egyptian ruler told us he would not sell us any more corn unless we brought him; so he must go';— and they promised faithfully to take care of him.

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"Indeed, they had lately grown to be much better men; they often thought of their former cruelty with sorrow, and one time when they were in trouble they said to each other, 'This has happened because we were so wicked to poor Joseph, when we sold him.' At last their father allowed Benjamin to go to Egypt with them."

"Why did not Joseph tell them at first who he was?" asked George. "I hope he did now."

"He wanted to find out if they really had improved, before he told them," said Mrs. Ellis.

"When he was sure that they had become better men, and were very kind to Benjamin, then he spoke to them in

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their own language, saying, 'I am Joseph; does my father still live?' and he wept for joy to be with his brothers again.

"At first they were alarmed, and thought he would punish them for selling him so long ago; but he assured them of his forgiveness, and that he loved them still. He told them that, if they would go home and bring their father to Egypt, he would give them a pleasant place to live in, and provide them with corn all through the famine, and as long as they lived. So they went for their father. You may imagine how glad he was to hear from his long-lost son, and to go and live near him. Joseph did as he had promised, and was

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very kind to his brothers as long as he lived."

"He was very good," said George, thoughtfully. "I don't believe I could have done so."

"It is not likely, my son, that you will ever have so great a wrong to pardon; but you must try to forgive the teasing ways and little injuries of your schoolmates now, that you may learn by degrees what Joseph knew so well, — how to do good to those who do wrong to you. But go now and play with Mary; she is tired of this long story."

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CHAPTER IV.

It was two or three nights before Mrs. Ellis was able to go on with her true stories; and the children were very glad, when, on the next Saturday evening, she called them to her.

"I will tell you to-night," she began, "a story about a little baby.

"The father and mother of this little child lived in Egypt, close by the great river Nile, that you were showing Mary on the map, Georgie, the other day. They were good people, but they could

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not be very happy, for they and their kindred were slaves.

"I do not mean that they were black people, like the poor slaves in this country that you have heard of, but they belonged to a nation named Hebrews, all of whom were kept in servitude by the Egyptians. Their masters were very cruel to them, and forced them to work hard all the time, in making bricks, and in such labor, and never let them rest in peace.

"There were a great many Hebrews; the king of Egypt thought there were too many; so he made a wicked law, that all the little Hebrew boys born after the law was made should be drowned.

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"The man and woman I spoke of had two children, — a boy two or three years old, named Aaron, and an older daughter, whose name was Miriam. These children were safe; but soon afterwards, another little boy was born; and if the king's officers should ever see him, they certainly would take him away and drown him.

"His mother kept him very carefully in her room, never going out with him, nor letting any one come in, but their friends. He was a beautiful baby, and his mother's heart ached to think that she should not be able to hide him much longer; for as he grew older, he would laugh and crow so loud that any one who passed could hear him.

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"When he was three months old, his mother took some large, strong rushes, and wove a pretty green basket of them; then she put pitch on the outside, that it might keep out water, and lined it with soft, white linen. In this little cradle she laid her darling baby. Miriam had been watching her with wonder, and now asked her what she was going to do. Her mother told her that she could not hide him any longer, and that she was going to leave him among the rushes on the river-side; and she hoped God would take care of him. So she carried him down to the river, laid the basket among the flags, and went home weeping; while Miriam stood among some palm-trees, at a short distance, to watch

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what would happen to him. She was very much afraid the crocodiles would seize him."

"What are crocodiles?" said Mary.

"O Mary, don't you know?" cried George. "I have one in my Book of Animals."

A little while was spent in finding the picture, and in wondering at the creature's huge mouth, and awkward form; when they both came back to the story with the question, "Well, mamma, did the crocodiles find him?"

"No, they did not. God intended this little boy to grow up to be one of the greatest men that ever lived; and he kept all harm from his cradle of bulrushes. Not long after he was laid

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there, the king's daughter and her maidens came down to the river-side. As they walked along, she saw this basket among the flags, and sent one of her maids to bring it to her. When she lifted up the cover, there was a beautiful babe asleep; but, startled by the sunshine and the voices, he woke up and cried.

"'Poor child!' said the king's daughter; 'poor little forsaken child! It must be one of the Hebrews' children. I will take care of it. But I shall want a nurse for it.'

"Just then, Miriam, who had been watching eagerly to see if the great lady intended to take her baby brother, came out from among the palm-trees,

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and said, timidly, 'Shall I go and find a nurse for you, to take care of the child?' The lady smiled, and said, 'Yes, you may go.'

"So Miriam ran off, in great delight, and went directly home. 'O mother!' cried she, 'such a noble lady has found my little brother! and she means to save him, and you are to go and nurse him!'

"How glad and thankful the mother was! She went to the palace and took care of her own little boy; but nobody knew she was his mother. The king's daughter adopted him as her child, and named him Moses. He grew up at her court, and had the best teachers in Egypt to educate him. But his mother

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told him who he really was, and about his poor countrymen; and he never forgot them, laboring so hard in slavery, while he, in that beautiful palace, had everything he wanted. To-morrow I will tell you some of the things he did when he was a man."

"I have not been at all tired to-night," said Mary; "I love to hear about little children. What was the lady's name, mamma?"

"I do not know, my dear; her father was called Pharaoh; but her name is not mentioned.

"Good night, children; remember to ask God to take care of you, as he did of little Moses."

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CHAPTER V.

THE next day was Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Ellis lived too far from church for little Mary to go; but George accompanied his father and mother. Very often their good minister's sermons were such as he could understand, and then he would listen very attentively. To-day, the sermon was not one that he would be much interested in, until near the close some words attracted him, and he attended closely to the rest. His mother was talking to a friend as they

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walked home, and could not listen to him; but when she called the children to her in the afternoon, George began with the question: —

"Mamma, was that the same Moses the minister was speaking of to-day? and what was he saying about his bringing down bread from heaven?"

"Yes, my dear, it was the same Moses who, when a child, slept in the ark of bulrushes. I will tell you about the bread from heaven, when you and Mary have said your Sunday lessons."

The hymns and questions in the catechism were repeated and explained, and then their mother went on with the history of Moses.

"I told you last night that Moses

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never forgot his countrymen, the poor Hebrew slaves. When he grew up, he thought a great deal about them and their sufferings, and he tried to find some way to help them. At last, after many years, as he was in a desert place alone, he saw a bush that seemed to be all on fire, glowing bright like flame; yet it did not burn up. While he was wondering at this, a voice spoke to him from the burning bush. It was the voice of God; it called him, and told him that God had seen how the Hebrews were oppressed, and that he, Moses, was the man he had chosen to lead them all out of Egypt.

"I cannot tell you now of the wonderful manner in which the Hebrews,

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or the Israelites, as they were often called, were freed from the Egyptians; but at last they all left the country together, with Moses and his brother Aaron to lead them.

"Between Egypt and Canaan, the land they were going to, there is a great sandy desert. Do not you remember, Georgie, in your Book of Animals, a picture of a camel, and the stories told about his living in the desert?"

"O yes! I was reading it only a day or two ago; it says there are no trees or grass in the desert, except in spots; nothing but sand; and no water, Mary! But the camel will travel days and days without eating or drinking. I forget the name of the desert it tells the most about."

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"Was it the Arabian Desert?"

"Yes, mamma, it was."

"It was through the same Arabian Desert that Moses led these thousands of people."

"But how could they live there?"

"They could not have lived there long, but God gave them food by a miracle. A miracle, as I have told you before, is anything that takes place against the usual laws of nature. A tree usually grows for years before it bears fruit; if God were to cause one to spring up and bear fruit in an instant, that would be a miracle.

"One morning, when the Israelites went out of their tents at sunrise, they found food lying on the ground all round

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them, as if it had come down with the dew."

"Food, mamma! what kind of food?"

"They had never seen anything like it before. It was sweet and pleasant to the taste, white in color, and was lying in little round pieces; they thought it looked like hoar-frost all over the ground. When they saw it, they said, 'Manna?' which was a Hebrew word, meaning, 'What is it?' and it was afterwards called manna.

"Everybody gathered up as much as they wanted; they either ate it as it was, or made cakes of it. Every morning, as long as they were in the desert, this manna fell; and they found with wonder, that, on the day before the Sab-

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bath, twice the usual quantity fell, and none at all on the Sabbath itself. This was to prevent their working on God's day of rest."

"Then this was what the minister meant by Moses bringing bread from heaven, was it, mamma?"

"Yes, Georgie; he was telling us what our Saviour, Jesus Christ, said: that though Moses gave the people food by a miracle, yet that he could give us better food, — true bread from heaven, to make our souls live and grow. He meant his teachings and example. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, mamma, I believe so. But I should have liked to see some of Moses's bread from heaven, — the manna. But

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what did these poor people have to drink?"

"There are here and there in the desert fountains or wells of water, in the midst of little green spots called oases; the people were guided from one to the other of these, and took a supply of water there. But twice the springs were so far apart, that all the water they carried had been used, and they began to suffer for want of it. Then God told Moses to take his staff, and strike a large rock or cliff near by, and immediately, the side of the rock opening, a plentiful stream gushed out; so that all the people drank, and filled their jars with the pure water.

"I said the people were guided from

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one place to another; a wonderful column of cloud moved along before them, and they followed it; while at night the column glowed like a pillar of fire, so that all the people could see it."

"How strange!" said Mary.

"Yes," said her brother; "I should like to have lived then, and to have had my bread every day from heaven, and a cloud sent to lead me."

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Ellis, "God as truly gives you your food every day now, and as truly gives you a guide, as he did to the Hebrews in the desert. Did you not ask him this morning, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' and, 'Lead us not into temptation'?"

"Yes, mamma, and I know you have

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often told me what it meant; I will try to remember it."

"Always try to remember, my dear children, that God is as much with us, and as near to us, as he was to the men we read about in the Bible, who heard his voice speaking to them. May he guide you always, as he did the Hebrews in the desert!"

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CHAPTER VI.

"Now, little Mary," began her mother the next night, as she took her usual seat, "I have a story to tell you to-night such as you like, about a little child."

"Yes," said the venerable George, "Mary can understand them better than older stories, such as suit me. Was this little child born in the desert, mamma?"

"No; it was after the Israelites reached Canaan, the country God had given them. Here they settled, and

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spread all over the country. They chose one place, named Shiloh, where they set up a tabernacle, — a kind of church; and they used to go there to worship. There were beautiful altars built there, and sacrifices were offered every day. There were numbers of men appointed to take care of this tabernacle; to burn the offerings, and to pray for the people. These were called priests; and many of them were very excellent men. At the time I am going to tell you of, the chief of these priests was a good old man named Eli.

"One day, when he was sitting in the court of the tabernacle, waiting to give advice or instruction to any who should come to him, he saw a woman praying

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very earnestly. Her name was Hannah, and she had come from her home in the country to worship God here at Shiloh; for they did not have churches then in every town, as we do now; but only this one for all the people. Eli went and spoke to her, and told her he hoped God would grant what she was praying for. She thanked the good old priest, and went home with her husband."

"What was she praying for, mamma?" asked Mary.

"She had no children, my dear; and she was asking God to give her a little son."

"And did he?".

"Yes, he granted her request; and a little babe was born, whom she named

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Samuel. When he was three years old, she told her husband that she wanted to carry little Samuel to Shiloh, the next time they went, and leave him there to be brought up at the tabernacle. Her husband was willing, so they took their child to Shiloh.

"Hannah asked Eli if he remembered the woman he saw praying there so long ago? 'For this child I prayed,' said she, 'and the Lord heard me. Therefore I will lend him to the Lord as long as he lives.' So when his father and mother had offered their sacrifice, they kissed their little son, and left him with Eli."

"I hope Eli was kind to him, mother," said George.

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"Yes, Eli was very kind to him, and taught him to be good; and everybody loved him. His mother lived so far off that she could only come to Shiloh once a year; but every time she came, she brought him a pretty coat, every year a little larger, rejoicing to see how tall he was growing, and what a good child he was."

"What did he do in the tabernacle, mamma?"

"He used to open the doors in the morning, and shut them at night, and do many little services to help the priests. He was very fond of old Eli, and would run directly if he heard him call. One night, when I think he was about seven years old, after he was laid down to

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sleep, he heard his name called. He started up, saying, 'Here am I,' and ran where Eli was lying: 'Here am I, for thou didst call me.' But Eli answered, 'I called not; lie down again.' And he went and lay down.

"Presently he heard the voice again, saying, 'Samuel!' Again the child rose, and went to Eli, saying, 'Here I am, for thou didst surely call.' Again Eli replied, 'I called not, my son; lie down again.'

"This happened a third time; and then Eli thought it must have been the voice of God calling little Samuel. So he told him to go and lie down; and if he heard his name called again, not to be frightened, but to answer, 'Speak,

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Lord, for thy servant heareth.' Samuel obeyed; and soon the voice spoke again, 'Samuel! Samuel!' The child knelt on his little bed, and humbly answered, 'Speak, for thy servant heareth.'

"Then God gave him a message to Eli, foretelling some event that would soon happen; after this Samuel lay down quietly until morning. In the morning, after he had opened the tabernacle doors, Eli called him, and asked him what the Lord had said; and Samuel repeated every word."

"Did God ever speak to him again, mother?"

"Yes, very often; and as he grew up, he became a prophet. He taught the people, explained God's will to them, and ruled over them."

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"God never speaks to people now as he did to Moses and Samuel, does he, mother?" asked Mary.

"No, not in the same way; he never tells us his will with an audible voice, as he did then; but he speaks with a voice in our hearts. Do you understand me?"

"Not exactly, mamma."

"This morning, George, when you were playing with Sammy Brown, I saw that Sammy's ball hit you. At first you were angry, and caught up the ball to return the blow; then I saw you drop it. Why was that?"

"Why, I thought all at once, 'No, I must not; he did not mean to hurt me.'"

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"That was your conscience that checked you; and, as I have told you before, God has given us our consciences to prevent our doing wrong. That thought, that prevented you from striking, was God's voice in your heart."

"I am glad I minded it, mother."

"So am I, my dear boy; and if you always listen humbly, as little Samuel did, God will speak to you yet more clearly, and will keep you from all sin. And you too, Mary dear; you are not too young to listen to this voice."

"No, mamma; I am almost as old as Samuel was; and I hope I shall always do as he did. It is a very pretty story indeed."

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CHAPTER VII.

"GEORGE," said his mother, the next evening, "do you know what a shepherd is?"

"Yes, mamma. I have seen a picture of a man keeping sheep, whom you told me was a shepherd. But I have seen sheep in the fields, and there was no shepherd with them."

"No; in this country only a few are kept at once, near some farm-house, where the people live who take care of them. But in Judæa, and in other

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countries, there are large flocks of sheep, which feed on the hills, and in pastures far from the towns; and then a man has to stay with them all the time, to keep off the wild beasts, and lead the sheep where the sweetest grass grows.

"There was once in Judæa a shepherd named David. He was quite young, and had several older brothers; but he was old enough to keep his father's flocks safe. He loved to sit alone with his lambs lying or grazing round him, and to watch the beautiful landscape by day and the stars by night, and think about God and his goodness. For he had learned to love God, who took care of him, as he did of his sheep; and while he was there in the fields, he used to

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write sweet hymns and sing them, for he was very fond of music. When you are older, you will think, as I do, that these hymns or psalms are some of the most beautiful poetry ever written.

"But David was brave too. Once or twice wild beasts had come among his flock, and seized the sheep, and he fearlessly attacked and slew them; he was not afraid to risk his own safety to defend the helpless sheep. But he once showed his courage in another way.

"There was at this time war between the Hebrews and a fierce nation called the Philistines, who knew not God, but worshipped idols. David's elder brothers were all gone to join the army, and to endeavor to free their country of these

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enemies, who had seized some of their towns. One day David's father told him to go and carry some things to his brothers, and to see how they did. David hired a man to keep his sheep while he was away, and went to the camp where the army was. When he reached the place, while he was talking to his brothers, he heard a loud, fierce voice; and looking toward the army of the Philistines, he saw a man defying the Israelites, and calling some one to come out and fight him."

"And did they go, mother? I would have gone!" cried George.

"This man, my dear, was of gigantic size, and very strong. He was about nine feet high."

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"O mamma," said Mary, "I thought you told me giants only lived in story-books."

"Such giants as Georgie was telling you about, Mary, never did really exist; but now and then men have been known eight or nine feet high. But this giant, whose name was Goliath, so terrified all the Hebrews, that none of them dared to go within reach of his terrible sword. But young David was not afraid; he said he would fight the Philistine.

"The king, who was with the Hebrew army, heard of him, and sent for him; but when he saw David, he laughed, and said: 'You can never kill this giant; you are so young and inexperienced.'

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"Then David told King Saul how he had slain a lion and a bear, saying, 'The Lord delivered me out of their power, and he will protect me if I attack this wicked Philistine.'

"So the king told him to go, and gave him some armor, and a sword; but he was not used to armor, and told the king he could not wear it; all he needed was his sling, which he had with him. Did you ever see a sling, George?"

"Yes, mamma; the boys use them sometimes to fling stones with."

"A sling is made of leather, and, a stone being put in it, it is whirled round the head, and the stone is slung out with great force. David took his shepherd's sling in his hand, and five smooth peb-

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bles from the brook, and thus armed, went toward Goliath."

"What did the giant say to him, mamma? Did he laugh?"

"Yes; he would not believe David was in earnest; he mocked at him, who came out to fight such a foe without even a sword, and cursed him by his false gods. David told him that he came in the name of the true God, and that He could give the victory to whom He pleased. Goliath then drew his sword, and came striding toward David; but David took a smooth stone, and put it in his sling, and threw it with all his force. It struck the giant in the forehead, and killed him in an instant."

"Was not he brave?" cried George. "Don't you like this story, Mary?"

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"Pretty well," answered little Mary. "And then did he go home to his sheep, mamma?"

"No, my dear; King Saul was so much pleased with him, that he kept him with him, and after many years David became king himself."

"What became of the rest of the Philistine army?" asked George.

"After they saw that their champion, as he was called, was dead, they turned and fled. Now, Georgie, what was it that enabled this shepherd-boy to be so courageous?"

"Was it because he trusted in God, mamma?"

"Yes; though he was but a slender youth, quite unused to arms, and know-

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ing nothing about fighting, he thought it was his duty to attack the giant, and was not afraid but that God would protect him. Remember what I am going to say. You will never have to fight with men; but you will have great evils to contend with. Then recollect, like David, that God can give the victory to you, though they seem so strong and you so weak. You will understand this better when you are older. Always trust in God, and never be afraid to do right."

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CHAPTER VIII.

ONE afternoon, the children summoned their mother from her work rather earlier than usual, to see a glorious sunset. It was such a sunset as is rarely to be seen in winter, with gorgeous clouds of purple and crimson rolling up over the sky. After they had watched it with admiration until the last ray had faded, Mrs. Ellis took her seat by the fire, saying:—

"Did you ever hear of people who worship the sun, George?"

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"No, mother. Do you mean that they think the sun is God?"

"Yes, my dear. I have told you before what is meant by idolaters, — those who worship images, or some of God's creations, believing they are gods. There were many such people among the Hebrews. Though they had seen such wonderful miracles done by God's power, and had been taught about him by Moses and Samuel, and other good men, yet they very often forgot him, and worshipped idols. They made altars on every green hill, and set up idols in the groves; and instead of obeying the true Jehovah, they performed many wicked actions, to please their false gods."

"Did they worship the sun, mother?"

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"Yes, one of their gods was Baal, or the sun; and a great many of the Israelites learned to serve him, or rather his priests, who were wicked people, pretending to know all about this great Power, as they called him. Good men often went to the Israelites, and tried to show them how they were deceived, and to persuade them to leave Baal; but they would not hearken. Among these good men was one named Elijah. He used to go among the people, and to the king, warning them with earnest words, that God would punish them for their idolatry; for the king himself worshipped Baal.

"At last Elijah told the king to bring all the priests of his faith together to

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Mount Carmel, to offer a sacrifice to their God, and that he would be there to meet them. So King Ahab gathered four hundred and fifty of the priests of Baal, and they all went to Mount Carmel, where Elijah met them, he being the only worshipper of God. All round the sides of the mountain stood great crowds of people, silently looking on.

"Then Elijah said: 'Let the priests of Baal slay a bullock, and lay it on an altar of wood, to offer it to the sun; and I will prepare a sacrifice to the Lord; and the God who sends down fire from heaven to burn his offering, he must be the true God.' All the people acknowledged that none but the true God could do this; and they promised

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to believe on the one who should answer by fire.

"In the first place, the priests of Baal built their altar; and, slaying a bullock, they cut it in pieces, and laid it on the wood. Then they prayed to their god to send down fire upon it, crying, 'O Baal, hear us!' So they cried from morning to noon; but all the while the bright sun moved silently up the sky, and no answer came. Still they cried aloud franticly, stretching out their hands, and praying, 'O Baal, hear us!' But the sun sunk slowly down to the west, and the beautiful sunset clouds began to gather round it, as you saw to-night; and no answer came.

"Then Elijah came quietly forward,

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and in his turn built an altar; and having caused a bullock to be slain, he laid the pieces upon the wood on the altar. He dug a trench all round it, and told the men who helped him, to bring four barrels full of water, and pour it over the whole. This they did three times, until the altar and everything on it was soaked with water, and the ditch round it was full."

"What was the water for, mother?" asked George.

"You know that anything wet will not catch fire easily. Elijah wanted to make it plain to the people that he could not kindle the wood himself, and deceive them. Then, standing by the altar, in the last rays of the setting sun,

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the prophet looked up to heaven and prayed aloud. All the people stood very silent, listening to his words, as he said: 'O Lord God of Abraham and our fathers! Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant. Hear me, O Lord, hear me! that this people may know that thou art the Lord God!'

"And immediately a fire fell from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood, with the very stones of the altar; and dried up the water in the trench. Then all the people fell on their faces, crying out, 'The Lord he is God! the Lord, he is God!'

"O," cried George, "I am glad they did! They could not help believing,

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could they, mamma? I hope they never forgot again who made the sun."

"Elijah spent all the rest of his life in the same way, trying to turn his nation from idolatry; and he did a great deal of good; but still they often forgot their God, who had saved them and led them so long. When his life was finished, a friend of his, named Elisha, became a great prophet in his stead. To-morrow I will tell you a story of the prophet Elisha."

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CHAPTER IX.

"MOTHER," began George, the next evening, "I have been trying to tell Mary what a prophet is; is it not somebody who knows what is going to happen?"

"The word prophet generally means a man who is inspired by God to foretell future events; but it is sometimes used in the Bible to mean teachers of the people, and sometimes poets, who have not this gift."

"Are there any prophets now, mamma?"

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"No one now can foretell the future, George. There is no need of such prophets now; before our Saviour came, God sent them to show people his will; but now we can go to the Bible and learn his will there. — I promised you a story about Elisha.

"This prophet went about, as Elijah had done, from place to place, instructing all who would listen to him, and working miracles to prove that God had commissioned him to speak to them.

"Once, as he was passing through a village named Shunem, a rich woman who lived there invited him to her house. She did this often, and they became great friends; at last she had a little room built on purpose for him,

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and furnished comfortably, so that whenever he came, even if it should be late at night, he might always find a chamber ready for him. She did everything for him that she could think of, for she was a good, kind woman, and her husband was willing that she should do as much as she would for the man of God, as they called Elisha.

"I told you they were rich; but there was one thing that they valued more than all their rich possessions; that was their little boy, — their only child.

"One summer's day his father was out in the cornfields, overseeing some men who were reaping wheat. The little boy asked his mother if he might go there too, and see the men cutting

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down the beautiful yellow corn. His mother was willing, and he went. He played about merrily, for a while, among the reapers; but the sun was very hot, and presently he went crying to his father, saying, 'My head! my head!' His father felt that his poor little forehead was all flushed and burning; so he told a young man that was near to take him up in his arms, and carry him to his mother as fast as he could. His mother was frightened to see him so sick; she took him up in her lap, and bathed his head. But it did no good; the fever grew worse, and in a few hours he died in her arms."

"O mamma!" said Mary, with tears in her eyes. "Poor little boy! Was his father at home?"

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"No; his father did not know he was very sick, and had not come home. His mother did not allow herself to weep, but she carried the little body into the room where Elisha slept when he was there, and laid it on his bed. Then she went out to speak to her husband, and asked him to have an ass saddled, and to send one of the servants to attend her; for she wanted to go to the place where Elisha lived. He asked her why she wanted to go in such haste? She was afraid to tell him what had happened, lest her grief should overcome her, so she only said, 'It is well.'

"When the ass was ready, she mounted; and though it was so warm a day, she told the servant who went

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with her to ride as fast as he could. So they rode in silence until they came where Elisha was. When she saw him, she dismounted from her ass, and threw herself at his feet, sobbing and crying so, that she could not speak. Elisha spoke kindly to her, and as soon as she could tell him what the matter was, he said he would go home with her. When they reached the house, Elisha went into his own room, and there, on his bed, was the little dead boy, lying so still and quiet, with a smile on his pale, cold face.

"The mother did not come into the room, for Elisha wished to be alone. So he shut the door, and, kneeling down, he prayed to God to hear him, and to

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give back her son to the poor mother. Then he stretched himself upon the body, putting his mouth on the child's mouth, and his hands on the child's hands. Presently he felt the cold lips and icy fingers growing warm. Elisha rose, and walked about the room; then again he stretched himself on the little boy, and life came back to the body; the child opened his eyes and looked wonderingly at Elisha. The good prophet thanked God with all his heart, and, going to the door, called the poor woman, who came weeping into the room.

"But behold! there sat her darling son on the bed, alive and well, looking as if he never had been so pale and weak as she had seen him last."

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"Was not she too very thankful to God, mother?"

"We cannot doubt it. It must have been a happy family that night, with the man of God sitting with them as their guest. They had been separated by death, but their Father in Heaven had united them again.

"My dear children, we ought to be thankful every day to God, that he has not separated us, — that he permits us to live together in health and peace; as thankful as that little family at Shunem were. Never forget this, my dear ones!"

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CHAPTER X.

MARY was very much pleased with her mother's last story. She spoke several times very affectionately of the good old prophet Elisha, and when, after two or three days' interruption, her mother said she was at leisure to tell them another true story, Mary petitioned for one more about Elisha. "And the little boy who lived at Shunem, mamma, do you know any more about him?"

"No, Mary, I know nothing further about him; but you shall hear another story about the prophet.

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"In some of the Eastern countries, there is a disease called leprosy. It is a dreadful disease, making the person who suffers from it very sick and weak, and covering the whole body with an eruption, that looks white and scaly. In a country near to Canaan, where Elisha lived, there was a nation called Syrians. They very often were at war with their Hebrew neighbors, and sometimes they carried off prisoners from them.

"The captain of their army, Naaman, was a great man; rich, and in high favor with the king; but all his honors did him but little good: he could not enjoy them, for he had the terrible disease I spoke of, — he was a leper. There was in his house a little maid, who waited

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on his wife. She was a young Hebrew girl, who had been taken prisoner by his soldiers, and carried away from her friends. But before she left her home, she had often heard of the prophet Elisha; she had heard of his bringing the child of the Shunamite woman to life, and of other wonders God had enabled him to do; and she said, 'I wish my master could see the prophet who is in my own country, for he could certainly cure him of his leprosy.'

"Some one who heard her told Naaman; and the great general resolved to go into the land of Israel and see the prophet. So he made haste and got ready his chariot and his servants, and took with him a present for the prophet,

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— six thousand pieces of gold, beside a great quantity of silver and handsome garments.

"Elisha heard that he was coming; and when the splendid carriage and horses stopped at the door of the humble cottage where he lived, he was not surprised. He did not come out and speak to Naaman, as might be expected: he sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash seven times in Jordan, and your health will return, and you shall be clean of this disease.'

"What is Jordan?" asked Mary.

"Don't you know?" said George; "I showed it to you on my map of Palestine: a river that runs north and south right through the country."

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"O yes!" said Mary; "I forgot its name. — Well, mamma, did he go?"

"At first he was very angry. 'I surely thought,' said he, 'he would come out to me, as suits my importance, and would stand and call on his God, and put his hand solemnly on me, to cure my disease. Why should I wash in Jordan? Are not the rivers of Damascus, in my own country, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage."

"O what a pity!" said Mary.

"So his servants thought. They knew that he was angry because the prophet had used so little ceremony, and had given him so trifling a thing

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to do; but they loved their kind master, and wished to see him well again. They went to him and begged him to reflect. 'If the prophet,' said they, 'had told you to do some great thing, very difficult, would you not have done it? Surely, then, you should obey, when he merely says, Wash and be well.'

"Naaman saw how foolish he had been. He made no answer, but went and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, and his flesh, the story says, came again like the flesh of a little child, all fair and healthy; and he was entirely cured. Then he and all his company hastened back to Elisha. The good old man came out to see him now, and Naaman thanked him again and again, and

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blessed the God who had healed him by Elisha's means. He urged the prophet to take a present from him; the gold and silver, or at least some of his splendid garments; but Elisha refused. He cared not for such things; all he wanted was to serve God, and do good to his fellow-men. So Naaman went home in his chariot, promising never again to worship idols, as he had done, but the God of Israel alone."

"How glad," said George, "the little servant-girl must have been, to see her master come home well!"

"I think, George," said his mother, "you might learn a lesson from this story of Naaman. When we were talking the other day about being useful,

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you asked what good a boy like you could do. I mentioned a number of things that you could do for others, which would be really doing good; do you remember your answer?"

"Yes, mother," answered George, looking rather ashamed; "I said I did not want to do such little things as those. I know what you mean: you think I am as foolish as Naaman was."

"It is not often," said his mother, "that we have great things to do; but such little duties as those I mentioned are always ready for us. If we want to become good and fit for heaven, we go to the Bible for direction; as Naaman went to the prophet. But instead of commanding us to do one great and

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difficult thing, some grand action, it tells us, if we want to go to heaven, we must do many little things, one little duty after another, all our life long."

"Well, mamma," said George, with a sigh, "I will try to remember. But I should like to do something great too."

"And perhaps you may, my boy; if you are faithful in little things, perhaps God may give you some great work to do, but not yet. Learn obedience in little things, and then you will be ready to serve him in any way; to live or die for him."

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CHAPTER XI.

"THERE was once a great city named Babylon."

"Let me get my map!" cried George, who was very deep in geographical studies. "Will you show it to me on the map?"

"It is not down on your map, George; there is no such city now. But you may find Turkey in Asia, and trace the river Euphrates. It was on that river that Babylon stood; it was the capital of a great empire. The city was very

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magnificent and beautiful; the king lived there in great pomp. At the time I am going to tell you of, the armies of the king of Babylon had been fighting against the nation of the Israelites, and had carried almost all of them into captivity. Thousands of them were there in the Babylonish empire; most of them as slaves, but some, who were in favor with the king, had been made officers and governors. The king's name was Nebuchadnezzar."

"What a funny name!" said Mary. "Do not ask me to-morrow if I remember this story, George; I could not tell you the king's name."

"Perhaps you can pronounce the names of three Hebrews who lived at

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the king's court, and held important offices: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

"King Nebuchadnezzar and all his people worshipped idols; but the Hebrews, or Israelites, knew that it was wrong to do so; and though they were far from their country and their temple, they still prayed only to God. The king had resolved to make a more splendid idol than had ever been known before. So he erected an image covered with gold, ninety feet high, in the plain outside of the city, and decreed a solemn festival in honor of this new idol.

"So he sent heralds everywhere, to call together all the captains, governors, and great men in his kingdom, bidding

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them come on a certain day; and they came. Then it was proclaimed, that, when the hour for the ceremonies arrived, it would be made known by a burst of music from all kinds of instruments; and then all the people present were to fall down and worship the golden image. If any one disobeyed, he should be thrown alive into a furnace of fire."

"O mother, how dreadful!" said Mary. "Did any one dare to disobey?"

"Yes, these three Israelites. The king was told that they would not obey him, and he sent for them. 'Is it true,' said he, 'that you do not intend to worship my golden image? Take care what you do. Very soon you will hear the music, announcing the time of the cere-

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mony; and then, if you fall down with the rest and worship, very well, — you shall be safe and honored. But if you refuse, within an hour you shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace; and then what good will it do you to have been obedient to your God? Is he able to save you out of the flames?'

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, saying: 'We know certainly that our God is able to save us out of any danger, even from a furnace of fire; and if he sees best, he will do so. But whether he save us from it, or let us die there, it makes no difference in our duty. O king! we will never serve your gods, nor worship the golden image you have set up.'

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"Then the king was very angry indeed. He spoke to his servants, and told them to heat the furnace seven times, so as to make it hotter than it ever had been before. Then they took these three men, bound them with cords, so that they could not save themselves, and brought them to the mouth of the furnace. By this time, the fire was so furious, that it looked like a great sea of flame roaring in the furnace; while the heat was so great that it scorched whoever came near it. So the king's servants threw in their victims as quickly as possible, and hastily drew back to where their master and his court were sitting, watching the cruel deed.

"Presently the king started up in as-

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tonishment, crying out, 'Did you not cast three men, bound, into the furnace?' They answered, 'True, O king!' 'But,' said he, 'I see four men, unbound, walking in the midst of the fire! and the form of the fourth is like a divine being!'

"So he went near the mouth of the furnace, and called, saying, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither!'

"So the three men came out of the furnace; and all the king's court, the princes, and captains, and governors, crowded round them, astonished to find them quite unhurt; not a hair of their heads singed, nor their clothes scorched,

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nor, as the story says, had the smell of fire passed on them. Then the king and his ministers glorified God, who had sent his angel down and delivered these men who trusted in him. After this, the king promoted Shadrach and his companions to some of the highest offices in the kingdom."

"Mother," said George, "you said there were a great many Israelites in the country round Babylon; did all the rest of them worship the golden image?"

"The king did not require all the people in the empire to be present; you know that would have been impossible: only the chief men and officers were formally summoned. Of course crowds

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of people went to see the show of their own accord, but the Israelites could stay quietly at home and not be missed."

"I hope none of them so far forgot their duty as to worship this idol. Did they ever go back to their own country?"

"Some of them did, after many years. Before they had been taken into captivity, they had been divided into twelve tribes; only two of these returned to Canaan. One of these was the most powerful of them all, — the tribe of Judah; and after their return they were called Jews. To-morrow I will tell you another story about them, while they were at Babylon; or rather about one of their good men."

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CHAPTER XII.

"After the Israelites had been in Babylon for many years," began Mrs. Ellis, the next day, "the king of Babylon was conquered by the armies of another king, who ruled over the Medes and Persians. You know where Persia is, George?"

"Yes, mother."

"His name was Darius, and he treated the Israelites as kindly as the former kings had done. He made some changes in the government at Babylon, appointed

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one hundred and twenty princes over the different parts of the empire, and made three presidents, to see that the princes did their duty. Of course these three presidents were the greatest men in the kingdom; and one of these was a Hebrew, a man of the tribe of Judah, named Daniel. He was an excellent man, very intelligent, of great judgment and skill. He did his business so well, and was so serviceable to the king, that he was in high favor.

"Darius found that he did his duty so much better than the other two presidents, that he trusted him wholly, and even went so far as to think he soon would make Daniel the head of the whole kingdom, next to himself. But

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the other presidents, and the princes, were very much displeased at this. They were angry that a Jew, one of a foreign and a captive nation, should be set over their heads; and they did not like to have so faithful a man to oversee them; for he prevented their doing wrong and cheating the king. So they consulted together, and resolved to find out some harm of Daniel, if they could, in order that they might tell the king, and have Daniel disgraced.

"But they watched him in vain; he was so faithful to the king, and so obedient to the laws of God, that they could find no fault nor error in him. Then they said to each other, 'We shall never find anything to complain of in

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this Daniel, unless we have a law made that he will think it wrong to obey.'

"So with this wicked intention they went to the king, and asked him to make a decree, that for thirty days nobody should present any petition to any one but him; that no man should pray to any of their gods for that time, nor make requests of any of the governors, but should all go directly to the king for what they wanted; and if they disobeyed, they should be thrown into a den of lions."

"Why," said George, indignantly, "what a foolish law! Did the king agree to it?"

"Yes, he did. He must have been a very weak man to do such a thing; but

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he was pleased to think that he should be the only one in the kingdom who could grant a favor. So he made the law, and signed it; and it was proclaimed all through the country.

"Now Daniel was accustomed, every morning, noon, and night, three times every day, to go to his room, and, opening the western window, which looked toward Jerusalem, where the temple used to stand, to pray to God. He was just going to his chamber one noon, when he heard the herald announcing the new law. He stopped and listened. He was grieved to hear so wicked a law proclaimed, but it made no difference to him; he knew it was his duty to pray to God, and he would

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do his duty, whatever happened. So he went in, and knelt down as usual.

"This was just what his enemies expected: they were watching him; and as soon as they saw him at prayer, they hastened to the king. They informed him, with great exultation, that Daniel the Jew, whom he had favored so highly, had broken the law he had just made. The king was very sorry to hear this, and very angry with himself for having passed such a decree. He tried to find some way to evade it, and to save Daniel. He would even have repealed the law, but these cruel men reminded the king, that the laws of the Medes and Persians never could be altered: the law was made, and must be kept. So

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the king, with a heavy heart, consented that Daniel should be punished for breaking it; and at sunset Daniel was sent for.

"The king told him how grieved he was, and how he wished to deliver him, saying, 'Thy God whom thou servest so faithfully will surely save thee.'

"Then the servants opened a cave or den, where several fierce, hungry lions were kept, and threw Daniel in, to be torn to pieces. A great stone was immediately put against the mouth of the cave, and sealed with the king's seal, that none of his friends might try to save him.

"Then the king went to his palace, but he would eat no supper, nor did he

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sleep all night. He would not let his musicians play to him; he was in great trouble and full of remorse to think that, for a foolish vanity, he had sacrificed the best man in his court. He had said to Daniel that his God certainly would deliver him; but he did not really believe it possible; he knew no God mighty enough to save his servants. However, as soon as day began to break, the king rose and hastened to the den of lions. As soon as the stone had been taken away, he cried, in a sad voice, scarcely expecting to be heard: 'O Daniel! servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to save thee from the lions?'

"O how glad he was to hear Daniel's

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voice! He answered, 'O king! my God has saved me; he sent his angel and shut the mouths of the lions, so that they have not hurt me. For he knew, O king! that I was innocent; nor have I ever done any wrong to thee.'

"Then the king joyfully commanded his servants to take up Daniel out of the den, and all saw that he was not in the least hurt. He had been all night with these hungry and savage beasts, yet they had slept quietly at his feet, and had not touched him. God thus showed, by a miracle, that he was pleased with what Daniel had done, and with his trust in him."

"What a noble man Daniel was!" said George, who had listened with great in-

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terest to this story. "It made no difference to him, you say, whether he was in danger or not; he would obey God all the same. Mother, I wonder if I shall ever do so."

"It is not likely, my son, that you will ever be in danger of being put to death for doing right, as Daniel was; but you may be persuaded, or even threatened, by people who wish you to do wrong. They may ridicule or injure you, for doing your duty. But never mind them, my boy, any more than Daniel did. It is hard to be laughed at; but if you want to serve God, as he did, never mind! Do what is right, at any rate, and bear the rest quietly; God will save you from all real harm!"

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PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE short days of December were drawing to a close. Christmas and New Year had for some time been in the children's thoughts, and many important preparations had been made for the holidays. On the evening before Christmas, George and Mary, rather wearied with their plans and anticipations for the next day, which they were to spend with their

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grandmother and cousins, sought their mother's side.

"Dear mamma, it is not too late for a story; do tell us one about Christmas."

"Shall I tell you the story of the first Christmas, my children?"

"Yes, mamma," answered George; "about the time when our Saviour was born. I have heard you tell it, but I always like to hear it; and Mary is so much younger, that I do not believe she knows anything about it."

"I will tell you first, then, children, that, as long ago as the time when Moses lived, God had promised the Hebrew people, that, after many years, a Saviour should be born, — a prince, a prophet,

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the Messiah, — for he was called by all these titles. This promise was often repeated to the nation by its prophets and teachers, and every person in the country had learned to look for some great man to appear among them. They thought that when he came he would make the nation the most glorious on earth, — that he would be king over all the earth.

"On the first Christmas night, there were shepherds in the country keeping their flocks by night; the shepherds being accustomed to watch the sheep all the time, — not in the day only, for the wild beasts were most likely to attack them in the darkness. Several of these men were sitting together, under the

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trees, probably, to protect them from the dew, watching the beautiful stars overhead, and the gentle sheep sleeping round them."

"But, mother," said George, "if it was Christmas, it must have been winter."

"The winter in Judæa is not like ours. It is a mild season, with a good deal of rain at times, but very little snow; often none at all. The grass keeps green all the winter. As these shepherds sat thus, suddenly a great light, a glorious splendor, shone round about them; and in the midst of the glory stood before them a beautiful winged angel. They were very much startled and frightened; some fell on their faces, while others

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started up to flee; for they did not know what this might be.

"But the angel hastened to speak, and to soothe their alarm. 'Fear not,' said he, 'for, behold! I bring you good news of great joy; and not good news to you only, but to all the people on the earth. For to you is born this day, in Bethlehem, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign to you,' — that they might find the child when they went to Bethlehem, — 'the infant is in a stable, lying in a manger, wrapped up in linen bands.'

"While the angel was yet speaking, the light increased, and the shepherds saw, not one angel only, but a multitude of the heavenly host, singing praises to

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God, and saying, 'Glory be to God in the highest! on earth peace, good-will toward men.'

"Then the angels and the wonderful light rose up, and vanished into heaven, among the stars.

"As soon as they had disappeared, the shepherds said to each other, 'Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this wonderful child, whose birth the Lord has made known to us.' They, as well as the rest of the Jewish nation, had been hoping every year for their Messiah, and now they knew that God had accomplished his promise. They did not wait until morning, but hastened to Bethlehem, which was a pleasant little town near by. It was often called the city of

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David, because David, the poet and king, whom I told you of, was born there.

"They soon found the stable where the child and his mother were, — the infant lying in a manger. The shepherds told his mother, whose name was Mary, and Joseph, her husband, what they had seen and heard in the fields, and all rejoiced and praised God together.

"Mary knew that her babe was to be the Messiah, for an angel had told her so before he was born; but she was deeply interested in the shepherds' story. The shepherds wondered that their Saviour, who was to be, as they thought, a great king and ruler, should be born in a stable, instead of a palace, and for his only cradle should have a manger."

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"What is a manger?" asked Mary.

"It is a place where hay is put for the horses and cattle to eat. This one was full of hay, and made a soft bed for the little babe. The reason why Mary and her husband were lodging in a stable at this time was, that they had come to Bethlehem a few days before, and had found the inn full. A great many strangers were in the town at the same time, and there was no room left for the new-comers to sleep except in the stable; but as they were obliged to remain in Bethlehem for a while, they had made that stable their home until some of the visitors should leave the inn.

"After the shepherds had seen the

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child, and had related what had occurred, they departed; relating these wonderful things to every one they met. Georgie, do you remember the words the angels were singing?"

"Yes, mother: 'Glory to God in the highest! peace on earth, good-will toward men.'"

"By these words they meant that men should praise God with their highest powers, for his mercy in sending a Saviour to earth, — a Saviour who should bring peace to the world, and teach men to live in love and harmony. Do not forget to-morrow, my children, to praise God for this great, this infinite mercy; to thank him for a Saviour who, if you will but listen to him, will guide and

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bless you all your life, — who will make you good and holy, fit to serve God on earth, and to be for ever happy in heaven."

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CHAPTER II.

CHRISTMAS and the holidays passed merrily away. Grandmamma and cousins were so kind and cheerful, presents, games, and mirth were so abundant, that our young friends' time was most happily employed. But that more serious thoughts were not wholly forgotten, their mother was glad to see, when, on the first quiet evening, she talked with them about the pleasant days they had passed, and about the festival of Christmas. They had remembered the glori-

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ous meaning of Christmas day: they too, with all Christians, had thanked God that unto them was born a Saviour.

Presently Mary said: "Will you not tell us another story about Jesus when he was a little child, mamma? Do you know any more?"

"I can tell you one more story of our Saviour's infancy, Mary. There were in some of the Eastern countries wise men, as they are called, or, as they styled themselves, Magi. Some of these Magi lived in Persia, others in Arabia; they gave their time to studying philosophy, with astronomy and other sciences. They had heard that all the people in the country of Judæa, — which, you remember, is not very far from Arabia, —

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were every year expecting that some great prince would be born among them, and every time a traveller came from that country, they would eagerly ask if the prince had appeared.

"I told you that these Magi studied the stars attentively; they had given names to many of them, and they knew what stars could be seen every night in the sky. So, one night, when several of them were viewing the heavens, they were very much surprised to see a beautiful star that had never been there before, very bright and large. 'What could this mean?' they asked each other. The star was in the direction of Judæa; and after some consultation, they decided that the Jewish prince so

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long looked for must be born; this was surely his star. And, as the shepherds had done, they resolved to go directly and see if they could find the child. So taking with them gifts fit to be presented to one so royal, they journeyed to Judæa, and to Jerusalem.

"They went first to the king of Judæa, whose name was Herod, and asked, 'Where is he who is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star while we were in the East, and have come to do him homage.'

"Herod knew nothing about what had taken place in Bethlehem, nor did any of his court know; but the priests said, if the Messiah really was born, it must be in Bethlehem, for the ancient proph-

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ets had spoken of that town as his birth-place. So the Magi went to Bethlehem.

"As they came near the town, they saw the star again. It seemed to stand, not only over the whole place, but over one particular house. They were very glad to see the star again; and, going into the house, they found the young child, with Mary, his mother."

"Were they in the stable now, mamma?"

"No, this was some time after; they were only in the stable until some of the strangers left the town. I suppose the star appeared on the night the Saviour was born; and since then the Magi had taken a journey of some length. When they found the child, they fell

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down and did him homage, as to a great king; and presented gifts unto him, — gold, and other precious things. Then they returned together to Persia, rejoiced that the long-expected prince had come.

"But there were other men who thought of this event very differently. You remember that I said, when the Magi were in Jerusalem, that Herod knew nothing of the birth of the child they inquired for; he knew, however, that the Jews were expecting a king, who, he feared, would take away his throne. Now, when he heard of the appearance of this wonderful star, and that the Magi had gone to Bethlehem expecting to find the young prince, he

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was very much troubled. He thought that, if this child were put to death, his crown would be safe; so he wickedly resolved to slay him. But as he could not be sure what infant was the dreaded Messiah, he sent his soldiers with orders to slay all the male children in Bethlehem under two years of age."

"O mother, did they?" cried Mary, with eyes full of horror.

"They did not kill the child Herod aimed at. Joseph was warned by God in a dream, that he must leave the town by night directly. So he took an ass, and placed Mary and her child upon it; and the next night they set out, leaving the place in the dark, lest any of Herod's soldiers should see them; and they

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journeyed as far as Egypt, where they lived until the cruel king was dead.

"But the next morning, the hard-hearted soldiers went from house to house in Bethlehem, dragging out all the dear little ones, the babes from their mother's arms, and the children who just began to totter about, and slew them all. O it was a dreadful day! and there was nothing heard there for a long time after, but mourning and weeping."

"I should not have thought Jesus's mother would have gone back there again," said George.

"She did not; when Herod was dead, they returned to their country, and lived in a village named Nazareth, farther

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north than Bethlehem. Here Jesus grew up to be a man, loving and obeying them; always kind, gentle, obedient, and industrious. The Gospel says, he 'grew in favor with God and man': he was thus preparing himself for the work his Father in Heaven had given him to do."

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CHAPTER III.

"MOTHER," began George, the next night, "Mary asked me what you meant by the work that Jesus had given him to do. I told her I believed he cured the sick. Was I right?"

"That was not what I meant when I spoke of the work God gave him, my dear. He came into the world to save men from their sins; to teach them how to be good, and to make them wish to be so. This was his peculiar work, — teaching men of God, and their duty

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to him. But our Saviour did cure the sick; both because he pitied and loved all men, and because he could prove by these miracles that he came from God. He wished to convince men that the truths he uttered were in reality messages from God, and they would be more ready to believe this, when they saw that his Heavenly Father gave him power to do such wonderful works. Would you like to hear about some of the suffering people whom he cured?"

"Yes, mamma, very much."

"Do you remember what I told you, when we were talking about Naaman, of the disease called leprosy?"

"You said those who had it were very miserable and weak, and there was an eruption all over them."

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"The disease, too, was infectious, and it was dangerous for lepers to live with the rest of the people; but there were no comfortable hospitals then for the poor and sick to go to and be taken care of; before Jesus taught men to pity the unhappy, nobody thought of building hospitals or asylums. So these poor lepers were obliged to live by themselves. No one would come near or touch them; they lived very lonely and miserable lives, afraid to approach any human being.

"But one time, when Jesus had been preaching to the people, and great multitudes were following him, they saw a man full of leprosy coming toward them. He had heard of Jesus, and of

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his power to cure diseases; and as soon as he saw him, he was certain that he would be willing to help him, who had suffered so long. He came directly toward Jesus; the people shrank away from him, with great disgust, bidding him keep away and not come near them; but he did not hear them, he was looking at the Master's face, so kind and pitiful. He knelt down before him, saying, simply, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' or well.

"Jesus was moved with compassion; he felt none of the disgust the others did, and he would show the poor man that he loved and pitied him. So he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will: be thou clean.'

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"And when he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was quite well. He felt as he had not done for years, — active and joyful, full of health and life; and oh! what thankful tears must have come into his eyes! No need now for him to go feebly back to his lonely hut, or to shrink away from the crowd; he could go now to his family and home! As he went, he could not help telling every one he met how he had been cured; and the story spread all over the country.

"At another time, Jesus, and a great crowd with him, were coming toward a city named Jericho. By the side of the road sat a blind beggar, who used

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to sit there every day, asking money from travellers. His name was Bartimeus; he was very poor, for he could not earn his living like other men; he could not work nor go about alone. You have seen that little blind boy that sometimes passes this street, with his sister?"

"Yes," answered Mary. "Poor little boy; he looks so unhappy sometimes! I asked him once, when I stopped to give him some flowers, if it was all dark to him. And he said, 'Yes; it is dark all day!'"

"Yes, it is always like night to him and he could only smell your flowers; he never saw one in his life. So it was with blind Bartimeus; he would think,

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as he sat there alone, 'O if I could only see! then I could work in the pleasant fields, and enjoy what other people tell me of, — the beautiful sunshine and landscape. Then I could earn something for myself, instead of sitting here all day begging! If I only could see!'

"But on this day I was speaking of, as he sat there musing, he heard a sound of many footsteps; there seemed to be a great crowd going by What could be the cause of such a multitude? One man came near him, and Bartimeus asked him what the matter was. He could not see who was going by, he said. The man told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing, and all these people were with him.

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"The beggar had often heard of this great prophet, and had often thought, if he could meet Jesus, he might be cured. So as soon as he heard who it was, he began to cry out aloud, 'Son of David! Jesus! pity me!'

"The people who were nearest him, told him to be quiet, and not make such an outcry. The prophet, they said, had no time to care for blind beggars. But he cried out so much the more, 'Son of David! pity me!'

"As soon as the Lord was near enough to hear him, he stopped, and told some of the people to call him, and to lead him safely through the crowd. Several hastened to the road-side, saying, 'Be of good courage! rise, he calleth thee!'

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"Up sprang Bartimeus, threw down the cloak he had been wrapped in, and, taking the hand of the man who spoke to him, was led to Jesus. Jesus said to him, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?'

"Bartimeus did not hesitate what to answer, for there was one thing he had wanted for years more than all else. 'Lord, that I might receive my sight!' He had faith in Jesus; that is, he was certain that he was able and willing to cure him. The Saviour answered, 'Receive thy sight. Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.'

"And instantly the poor blind man could see! he saw the light, and the blue sky, the crowd that stood watch-

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ing him; and, above all, he saw the face of the blessed Saviour. No wonder that he followed him with the rest; all he wished now was to show his gratitude to one who had given him such a blessing. Jesus cured many of blindness, and of every disease. He cured all the sick who came to him."

"But how could very sick people come to him, mother?"

"Their friends brought them, often on beds and litters. On one occasion, Jesus was sitting, teaching, in the court of a house. The houses in Judæa were usually built in a hollow square, with an open yard or court in the middle. This made a pleasant place to sit, in fine weather, and if it rained, or the sun

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was too hot, an awning was stretched over it. At this time, the awning was drawn over, and the little shaded yard was crowded with people, who were listening to the Master's teachings.

"In the neighborhood lived a man who was paralytic; he could not move nor help himself; he had lost all power over his limbs. When his friends heard that Jesus was in this house near, they resolved to take the sick man there. So four of them took up the mattress he was lying on, and carried it through the streets to the house; but they could not get through the crowd so as to come near to Jesus, and the people were too eagerly listening to him to heed them. After consulting what should be done,

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they carried him up to the roof of the house, which was not more than one story high; then they brought ropes, and, taking away part of the railing round the roof, and throwing back the awning, they let the couch, with the sick man, down into the midst of the crowd, before Jesus."

"What a good plan," said George. "Did not Jesus heal him in a moment?"

"Yes, he said to the poor paralytic, who had not moved for years, 'Arise! take up thy couch, and go unto thy own house.'

"Immediately he rose up before them all, and took up his bed; he was as strong and well as any man there. And he went home, praising God."

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CHAPTER IV.

"I TOLD you yesterday, my children, that Christ's miracles were performed, not only to help the suffering, but to prove to men that God had given him power and wisdom more than human. To-night I will tell you of instances in which this divine power was shown very wonderfully.

"So many people crowded at all times to hear him, and he taught them so constantly, that at times he was very much wearied. He often preached on the

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shores of the Lake of Galilee. Georgie, bring your map of Palestine."

"Here is the Lake of Galilee, or Sea of Tiberias, mamma. I remember it."

"One day our Saviour had been, for many hours, in the midst of the crowd; evening came, but the people, anxious to hear him, still lingered. It was a warm summer's day, and the kind Teacher was almost exhausted. He said to his disciples, who were accustomed to attend him, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.'

"When the crowd saw he was leaving them, they dispersed, and, entering a small vessel, Jesus sat down in the stern, leaning upon a pillow; and when the disciples had spread the sail,

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and the vessel began to glide along, he fell asleep.

"But while he was sleeping quietly, a sudden storm came up, and the wind, striking the vessel, almost overset it. The waves dashed high, and began to fill the boat; it was a great tempest, such as we saw last summer on the sea-shore."

"O mother! when we saw that boat upset? What did these poor men do? Why did not they speak to Jesus?"

"They did, — they woke him, crying out, 'Master, we shall be lost! Carest thou not that we perish?'

"Jesus had been sleeping so wearily, that the tempest had not waked him; but as soon as they called him, he arose,

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He looked around at the great foaming waves, and the black cloud, and then 'he rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water, and said unto the sea, Peace! be still! And the wind fell, and the raging of the water ceased, and there was a great calm.' All became in a moment as peaceful as a beautiful summer evening, when the water seems to sleep, and only the gentlest breezes blow. So they came safe to the shore."

"But, mother, how could the waves hear him?"

"They are not living, and of course they did not really hear his voice, my son. But you know it is God's power that makes the wind and tempest, and he can calm them in a moment. He

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gave to Jesus power over all things on the earth, and by this divine authority he hushed the storm.

"I will tell you another instance of this power. Our Saviour had been teaching, as usual, a great multitude; — there were more than five thousand people crowded round him. It was a desert place, some way from any village; and when the evening was approaching, the disciples said to him, 'Master, it is late, and the people have nothing here to eat. Is it not best to send them away now, that they may go into the villages, and buy food?'

"Jesus answered, 'They need not go away; give ye some food to them.' But they said, 'How can we get food enough for all these people?'

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"Jesus asked them how much they had; they said a boy was there with a little food to sell, but all he had was five barley-loaves and two small fishes; and what was that among five or six thousand people?

"Jesus bade them bring the bread and the fish to him, and then go among the crowd, and arrange them in regular companies, sitting down on the grass. It was a green, grassy field where they were; and soon they were all sitting down, by hundreds and fifties, in separate groups. Then our Saviour took the five loaves and two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, asked God's blessing upon them. Then he gave to his disciples, and they carried the food round to the

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people, and every one of that great multitude ate as much as they chose of both bread and fish: there was enough for all."

"I don't understand, mother," said Mary.

"The loaves and the fishes multiplied under our Saviour's hands, Mary. Food was created for all those people by the power that God had given him. Even after all had satisfied their hunger, the disciples gathered up twelve baskets full of the pieces that had been left; for their Master told them not to waste anything."

"It is very strange," said George, thoughtfully. "What wonderful power! But why did they sit down so regularly, mother?"

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"So that the disciples might easily reach all of them, and omit none. If they had stood in a confused crowd, some man or child might have been overlooked in the distribution. But I will tell you what took place after this miracle.

"When they had eaten, Jesus dismissed the people, who now were refreshed, and able to go to their homes without weariness. Then he bade the disciples cross the lake in a boat, to the village of Capernaum, where he often resided, while he went alone upon a quiet hill-side to pray.

"It was now dark, and he was there alone with God; he loved to seek such solitude after a day's toil, and to refresh

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his soul with prayer to his Father, in whose service and love he lived. But the disciples, when they had gone some way from shore in their boat, found the sea very rough. The wind was contrary to them, so that they could not hoist their sail, and they were very much tossed about while rowing. They were quite tired and discouraged, when they saw a form approaching them, moving over the water. They discerned it by the starlight only, and thought of course no man could walk on the waves, so it must be a spirit; and they, being much alarmed, cried out for fear.

"But it was no phantom, it was Jesus. He had seen from the hill how much difficulty they met, and how weary they

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were; so, leaving the quiet rest he needed so much, he came to them, walking on the water as if it were solid ground. As soon as he heard their exclamations of terror, he spoke encouragingly to them, 'Be of good cheer! it is I; be not afraid!' By this time he reached the vessel, and they gladly received him in, full of wonder and awe. Directly the wind ceased, and they very soon reached the shore.

"We were speaking just now, George, of that great storm last summer, when we saw the boat upset, and when so many vessels were wrecked. When Mary was so frightened, do you remember my talking to her and to you about God's power over the storm, — how he

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made it for good purposes, and could hush it in a moment, so we need not fear?"

"Yes, mamma; and I remember you said Jesus taught us so."

"I did; and one way which he employed to teach us this truth was by these miracles I have been telling you of. The tempest and the sea obeyed him, thus showing that God has supreme power over his works, and can even give this power to whom he will. When the wind, or fire, or lightning, destroyed lives, or what was valuable to men, we know now that it was not by accident. God did it all.

"But now good night,—it is late."

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CHAPTER V.

"THE city of Capernaum," began Mrs. Ellis, when she next sat down with her children in the twilight, "is one of the chief cities in Galilee. Our Saviour made it his home for some time, and wrought many miracles there. One of the principal men of the place was named Jairus; he was one of the rulers of the synagogue or Jewish church there, and was quite wealthy and important. He had only one child, — a little girl."

"What was her name?" asked Mary.

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"I do not know, my dear; but I can tell you how old she was, — she was twelve. At the time we hear of her, she had not been well for some time: her father and mother were very anxious about her, but hoped she might soon recover. However, one morning she seemed much worse, and the physician told them it was impossible she should live; that in a few hours probably she would die.

"The mother began to weep bitterly; but the father, after a short silence, asked if the great Teacher was in the city. He had often seen Jesus, and had heard of his healing the sick; and now he thought, if he had come back to Capernaum, he would seek him.

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"Upon inquiry, he found he was in the city, and was now at the house of a rich man named Levi, who had invited him to a feast. Thither Jairus went directly. When he saw Jesus, he did him reverence, saying, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. I pray thee that thou wouldst come and lay thy hands on her, that she may live.'

"Jesus arose immediately and followed the anxious father, who said no time was to be lost. His disciples went with him, and a great crowd, eager to see the miracle. The ruler's house was at some distance; and before they came near it, they saw one of his servants coming toward him. He came up to

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Jairus, looking very sad, and said to him, in a low voice: 'Thy daughter is dead. She has just ceased to breathe. It is no use troubling the Teacher any longer.'

"When the father heard this, he stopped in despair, saying, 'It is too late, — it is of no use to go on.'

"But Jesus, who had heard the message, said to him, in the kindest tone, 'Fear not, — only believe, and she shall be restored.'

"Jairus made no answer; he scarcely understood: he was thinking that his only child, his darling, was gone for ever. But they moved on. Jesus spoke to the crowd, and bade them leave him now, and he also sent back all of his

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disciples, except three. When they went into the house, there was much noise of weeping and lamenting. It was the Jewish custom to cry and wail aloud when any one died, and to make mournful music in the house.

"Jesus said to the minstrels and the crowd of persons who were lamenting, 'Why do ye make this weeping and mourning? The maid is not dead, but sleepeth.' But they laughed at his words, for they knew she was dead; they had seen her cold and motionless. But Jesus sent them all away; then, with the father and mother of the child, and the three disciples, he went into the room where the body lay.

"In a quiet, shaded room, on a white

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couch, lay the little girl, so quiet and peaceful, looking so like sleep, that the father thought he understood what the Teacher meant, when he said she was sleeping. But Jesus meant more than the beautiful quiet of death; he meant that by God's love and power, given to him, she could be as easily awaked as from a night's sleep.

"He went to the side of the bed, and, taking one of the small white hands gently in his, he said to her, 'Maiden, arise!'

"And her spirit returned: she opened her eyes. She no longer felt sick and languid, as before she fell into death's sleep; she was well and strong. She arose from the bed, and hastened to her

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mother. Then what wonder! what joy, and gratitude! Her parents kissed their daughter again and again, — their dear restored child! But the Saviour's kindness perceived what they did not. She had been so long ill, and without nourishment, that, now she was restored, she really needed food. So he bade them give her something to eat; and then quietly left the house."

"O mother! that is a beautiful story," cried Mary.

"Yes, indeed," said George. "How I should like to have been there! Mother, did Jesus ever bring anybody else to life?"

"Yes, my dear; to-morrow I will tell you a story of such a miracle, which is

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too long for to-night. But I shall have time now to speak of the widow of Nain.

"As our Saviour was travelling in Galilee with his disciples, he approached a city called Nain. When they were near the gate, they saw a funeral procession coming out. The Jewish custom of burying the dead was to carry them on a bier or litter, merely wrapped in a shroud, without a coffin. Four men carried the bier, and the friends and mourners followed on foot.

"Those who were with Jesus stopped to let the train pass; one asked who was dead, and who it was that was weeping by the bier. One of the foremost among the attendants answered, it was a young

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man who had died. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; it was she, he said, who lamented so. Her husband had died some years before, since which time this son had supported her, taken care of her, and made her happy; but now, the man said, she would have to live with strangers.

"While they were talking, they saw that Jesus was moving through the crowd toward the bier; he looked compassionately on the mother, saying, 'Weep not!'

"She looked at him wonderingly, perhaps thinking, 'Ah, why should I ever stop weeping?' He laid his hand on the bier, and the four bearers stood still. Then Jesus said, in a calm, distinct voice,

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so that all could hear him, 'Young man, I say unto thee, arise!'

"And he that had been dead sat up, and began to speak; and he delivered him to his mother."

"How glad he must have been," cried George, warmly, "to come back and take care of his mother again! Mamma, I wish Jesus had been here when Cousin Henry died."

"We can hardly help wishing, my son, when we lose a friend, to have him given back to us. But if we have learned to love Jesus, we are soon willing to leave our friends with him. Cousin Henry has seen, I trust, that kind Saviour whom we long to see,— who taught us, by these miracles in

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part, that the soul does not die when the body does, but that God still takes care of and blesses us after we leave this world."

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CHAPTER VI.

GEORGE and Mary had been waiting very patiently for their mother, the next evening, for nearly an hour. She was detained by company; but as soon as she was at liberty, she hastened to the nursery. She found the children examining, by the bright light of the fire, the map of Palestine which had been given to George, finding out the towns mentioned by their mother, and talking of the country where so many wonders had taken place. Taking the map, Mrs. El-

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lis pointed out to them a village quite near to the chief city, Jerusalem.

"This small town," she said, "is Bethany. It was a quiet spot, where our Lord used often to retire, when the day had been spent in Jerusalem, to escape from the heat and the crowd. While there, he usually stayed at a house where lived a brother and two sisters. They were excellent people, who loved him sincerely, and always received him with joy.

"The brother's name was Lazarus; the older sister was named Martha, the younger Mary. Martha was the housekeeper, and whenever Jesus visited them, she would try to set before him the best entertainment she could. Jesus did not

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care for luxuries nor feasts; he preferred to have Martha sit quietly down, as Mary did, to converse with him, and listen to his words; but still Martha thought no care of hers could show enough love to her friend.

"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, and many a happy hour did he spend in Bethany with them. But of course he often was absent for many weeks.

"Do you see this region on the map east of the river Jordan? it is called Peræa. At one time our Saviour was teaching in the towns and villages of that part of Palestine, and had been some time absent. While he was gone, Lazarus was taken very ill. After a few

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days, his disease grew worse, and the sisters, who had been hoping every day that Jesus would return, resolved to send a messenger to him. When the messenger found him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, behold! he whom thou lovest is sick.'

"When the Saviour heard this, he did not go directly to Bethany, as they expected, but stayed two days longer in the place where he was."

"Did he not go, mother! Why not?"

"He knew it was best for him not to go at first, my dear; you will see presently why it was so. But we cannot help thinking he must have had a struggle with himself, so to speak, not to fly

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to their aid; to leave his friends so much longer in their distress, when his own heart was aching with them. In two days' time he told his disciples that he was going back to Judæa.

"They tried to dissuade him, for the Jews had threatened his life if he came there again. But he said he must go, and they would not desert him; so they went toward Bethany.

"The journey occupied some days, as they travelled on foot; so that, by the time they approached the village, Lazarus was dead, and had been buried four days. Jesus did not go into the town, but sent word to Martha and Mary that he was in the neighborhood. The sisters were sitting weeping in their

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house, with many friends around them, some of whom had come from Jerusalem to try to comfort the mourners, for Lazarus was much loved. The messenger spoke to Martha aside; she rose directly, and hastened to the place where Jesus was.

"As soon as she saw him, she said, what had been in her mind all the time since she had sent for Jesus: 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' Jesus answered, 'Thy brother shall rise again.' She said, 'I know that he shall rise at the resurrection, at the last day.' But she did not understand that he spoke of Lazarus rising to live on earth again.

"After a little more conversation, she

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went back and brought Mary, who, falling at his feet, repeated Martha's touching words: 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.'

"When Jesus saw her weeping so bitterly, and the Jews who had come out with her weeping also, his own eyes filled with tears. He always sympathized with those who were in trouble; and, my children, he sympathizes now with all who mourn. And as, at his own request, they led him to the place where Lazarus' body was laid, he groaned and wept.

"The Jews said to each other, seeing his tears, 'How much he must have loved him, to be so troubled at his death!'

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"The dead were not buried in Judæa as they are here, in the earth, but they were placed in caves or tombs, each body being laid separately in a niche of the rock. In such a cave was Lazarus laid, with a large stone closing its opening. Jesus bade them take away the stone. It was done, and they could look into the dark, quiet tomb, while Jesus looked up to heaven. 'Father,' said he, 'I thank thee that thou hast heard me!' All the multitude stood silent, awaiting what should happen; when Jesus spake again, with a loud and distinct voice, to the dead man in the tomb, 'Lazarus, come forth!'

"At that word, God gave back life to the dead; and, rising from his stony bed,

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Lazarus came out into the daylight. He was wrapped in his funeral shroud, his head covered with a napkin. All stood struck with amazement, gazing at Lazarus as if doubting their senses; nor did they offer to assist him, for he was trying to free himself from the bands. Jesus perceived his situation, and at his bidding, the disciples freed him from the shroud, and Lazarus, alive and conscious, hastened to embrace his dear sisters, and to thank the Saviour who had given him back to them.

"Many of those who were present, who had doubted before if God had truly sent Jesus, now believed on him, and, as he himself said, the death of Lazarus was for the glory of God!"

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"That is the reason, then," said George, "why he stayed away so long. It was best for Lazarus to die, was it not, mother?"

"Yes, my dear, it was the means of much good in many ways. Jesus would have saved the sisters from their grief, if it had not been for the best. And Jesus was the Son of God, his very image; and by his love he showed us what his Father's love is. You spoke yesterday of Cousin Henry's death; do you not see that God would have spared his mother such an affliction, if it had not been for the best?"

"Yes, mother, it must be."

"It must be so truly. God is love: whatever he does is done in love, even

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as our Saviour's actions were. Fix this in your hearts, children, that you may believe it when the hour of trial comes!"

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CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN. P. 176.

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CHAPTER VII.

"MOTHER, tell us more of what Jesus taught," began little Mary. "I love him very much."

"And he loves you, my darling. While he was on earth, he would often notice and bless little children.

"Once, when he was teaching, several mothers came bringing their infants and young children, that he might lay his hands on them and bless them. The disciples were unwilling to have him interrupted, so they told the parents to go

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away; but Jesus was displeased at this, and said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

"Then he took the little ones in his arms, and blessed them, for he loved all the lambs of his flock, as he called them. He still loves children; he still invites them to come to him, and is pleased when they wish to learn of him and obey him. You asked me to tell you what he taught us: I hope you will all your life learn more and more of his teachings; they cannot be explained at once. But I will tell you to-night of one way in which he instructed the people who came to him.

"He used parables, or short instruc-

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tive stories, to explain his meaning; and the disciples, who wrote his history, have preserved many such beautiful parables. Jesus not only showed us the love of God by his own love, as I have told you, but he repeated often that God is more kind to us than our own parents can be; that he takes tender care of all his works. He pointed out some little sparrows, which are almost the smallest of birds, and said that God made and took care of every bird, fed it without its own labor, and knew when each one, even each tiny sparrow, died. He showed his hearers some beautiful lilies growing near, and bade them observe how gracefully each one was formed, how splendidly colored; saying, that

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God clothed every flower in its lovely leaves and sweet odors. 'How much more,' he added, 'will God feed and clothe you.'

"We ought to remember, children, when we see such beautiful works of God, how they show his love and kindness. We need not wait until next spring for the sparrows and lilies, to learn the lesson Jesus taught; did we not see the snow-birds yesterday, Mary?"

"O yes, mamma! and God keeps them warm and happy all winter, does not he? And he takes care of us too, and gives us houses and fire?"

"Yet we do not always thank him, nor remember him; we even disobey and displease our kind Father; and then

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perhaps we fear he will not forgive and love us still. Men never knew whether God would forgive their sins, until Jesus taught us that he gladly forgives those who are truly sorry for having done wrong. He related this parable, to show God's love to the penitent.

"A certain man had two sons; the younger grew discontented with his quiet home, and asked his father to give him his portion of the inheritance. His father gave him the money he intended for him, and he directly went into a far country, where he could spend it without his father's knowledge. Of course he took little care of his money; he spent it all in riotous living, so that it soon was all gone.

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"About the same time, there was a famine in the country where he lived; and he not only was poor, but began to be in great want, and to suffer hunger. Fearing he should starve, he begged employment of a farmer; but the farmer had little to give him. He was sent into the fields to feed the swine; and he would eat the dry husks and pods he was carrying to them, so famished was he.

"But he began now to remember how happy he had been at home; how kind and bountiful his father had been to him. He said to himself, How many hired servants at my father's house have abundance of food, while I, his son, am dying with hunger! I will arise and go

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unto my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son!'

"This was the best thing he could do; it was the only right course for him. Our Saviour, in telling the parable, said, 'He came to himself'; when he made this resolution, he came to his right mind. So he arose directly and went to his father.

"But when he was yet far off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and, instead of coldly waiting for him to come and make his confession, he ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. He was thin and worn with hunger; his clothes were only rags; but

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it was enough for his father that he had come back penitent. The son confessed how unworthy and wicked he had been; but the father bade the servant bring forth the best robe and put it on him, 'and put a ring on his hand,' said he, 'and sandals on his feet, and kill the fatted calf, that we may make a feast and be joyful; for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.'

"So they made a great feast, and had music and dancing, for the father wished to show his son how glad he was to have him leave his evil ways, and return to him.

"When Jesus related this parable, there were many sinners listening to

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him; and he explained to them that God was their Father, and would welcome them whenever they should repent and go to him in prayer. He said there was joy in heaven over every sinner who repented; for God never forgets his children, however wicked they may be. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd, comparing himself to one of those watchful keepers of sheep I have told you about; and he asked those who heard him, if a shepherd would not seek far and near for a lost sheep. He would leave his flock and go among the steep mountains, into dangerous and lonely places, to find one poor, little wandering lamb. So had Jesus himself, the Good Shepherd, come to seek and to save those who were lost."

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"Did not the poor sinners feel very glad to hear this, mother?"

"Yes, it was indeed good news to them, and many gladly believed on him. Nor was it good news to them only; it is so to us. We may not go so very far astray as they had done, but we all have sinned against God; how grateful we ought to be to Jesus, that he came and suffered and died, to teach us God's love and mercy to the sinful!"

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CHAPTER VIII.

"But Jesus did not teach us of God's love alone," began Mrs. Ellis, the next evening; "he taught us what we must do to please him. If our Father in Heaven is kind and merciful, we also must be merciful, or we shall not be worthy of his love. We must be forgiving, and pardon those who injure or trouble us, or we shall not deserve his forgiveness. We must use the good things he gives us to bless other men, or we have no right to pray for new

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blessings to ourselves. Many of Jesus's parables taught this lesson: I will repeat two of them to you.

"Not many miles from the city of Jerusalem is a place named Jericho. The road between the two was very dangerous, being frequented by robbers. Jesus said, there was a certain man, travelling this road alone, when he was attacked by a party of these robbers; he made some resistance, but they knocked him down and wounded him; then, taking what money he had, and his most valuable clothes, they went away, leaving him lying half dead on the ground by the side of the road. He was too weak and faint to ask for assistance; and when a traveller approached him, he could not speak.

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"This man was a priest; he was going to Jerusalem to perform some services in the temple of God. He perhaps thought himself a very good man; but when he saw some one lying by the road, he thought he would not stop to see if that man was dead; it was none of his business, — he was in a hurry.

"Presently another man came by: he just glanced at the sufferer, and passed by on the other side of the road."

"But, mother," said George, indignantly, "why did not they stop? How could they be so cruel?"

"I suppose they were afraid the robbers might come back. It was a lonely place, and all they cared for was their own safety. Seeing this man so much

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hurt made them think that perhaps they were in danger themselves, so they hurried on; while the dying man gave up what little hope he had of life, for no one would help him.

"But in a little while there was a sound of some one else coming; it was a man mounted on an ass. This man was a Samaritan; he belonged to a people who lived close by the Jewish nation; but they were at enmity, and the Jews and Samaritans would scarcely speak to each other when they met, and would often try to annoy each other. This man, when he had been at Jerusalem, had probably been often mocked by the Jews, and reviled for being a Samaritan; but he was a good man, and

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forgave them. Now, as he rode along, he saw a poor, wounded man lying by the road-side; he did not stop to think that he was only a Jew, and that the Jews had ill-used him; neither did he care for the danger of the robbers coming back; all he thought was whether he could help the poor sufferer.

"He dismounted from his animal, and, finding he still lived, began to dress his wound with some oil and linen bandages. He gave him some wine, too, and spoke kindly to him; and when he was a little revived, he helped the man to mount the ass, while he led it, walking by its side. When they came to the nearest inn, he took the man in, and made him comfortable for the night.

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Next morning he called the keeper of the inn, gave him what money he had with him, and said, 'Take care of him, and the next time I come this way, I will pay you whatever you spend for him more than this.'

"Then our Saviour told those who heard him, to go and do likewise; to be forgiving and merciful, like this good Samaritan."

"That was not something that really happened, was it, mother?" said George.

"I do not know that it ever did, my dear; but it is not improbable. Our Saviour often made use of the events that took place around him, to teach those who were interested in them. Perhaps this was a fact, and our Sav-

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iour repeated it, not only to show how men ought to treat each other, but to make his hearers feel more kindly toward the Samaritans, whom they disliked so much.

"I will tell you another parable, which teaches us how to use the good things God gives us.

"A certain nobleman was about to travel into a far country, to receive a great possession that belonged to him. He called his servants, and gave money to each of them, to take care of, and trade with, while he was gone. To one he gave a talent, which was a large sum of money, to another two talents, and to a third five; then he went away, and was gone a long time.

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"As soon as the money was intrusted to them, two of the servants went to work as their master wished them to do; they went into business, and by industry and prudence earned a great deal of money. But one was idle and disobedient; he did not want the trouble of business, and as he had received only one talent, perhaps he was envious of the others for having more. So he went and hid his money away, and wasted his time until his master came home.

"The nobleman returned, having received his inheritance; and calling his servants, he asked after their money, and how they had succeeded in business.

"Then he who had received five talents came, and brought twice the sum,

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saying, 'Master, thou gavest me so much money; I have earned as much more, and doubled my talents.'

"Then his master said, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.' So he appointed him to an important office.

"Then he who had received the two talents came, and brought four talents; for he too had doubled his money. His master praised him, as he had done the first, and gave to him also reward and honor.

"But presently the third came, with a look of shame, to tell his master that he had earned nothing at all; he said he was afraid to go into business, and

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he had kept his money safe, buried in the ground. His master was much displeased. 'Thou wicked and slothful servant,' said he, 'couldst thou not have made even some little use of so much money?' So he took his talent from him, and sent him away in disgrace."

"I know what that parable means," said George; "that men must use their money in a right way. But I have no money, nor has Mary."

"No, while you are children, your talent is not money. But this parable refers to other gifts of God as well as to money. You have many opportunities of learning and improving yourselves: these are among your talents. If you employ your school talents well, learn-

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ing diligently, and overcoming difficulties patiently, then you will be faithful servants; and God will give you afterwards higher work to do. But if you waste your time, do not improve your privileges, but are idle and careless, then you will be slothful servants, not fit to do God's work."

"Mother!" cried George, eagerly, "I am not idle! I mean to improve my talents, and grow up fit for something. I want to be a good man, and work."

"So do I!" said little Mary, modestly.

"God grant you may always improve his blessings, my children. Remember he gives us all these privileges, not to use for our own selfish pleasure,

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but to spend in his service, and for the good of men.

"They are all his, our time, our money, our powers. He will ask an account of them all."

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CHAPTER IX.

MRS. ELLIS, on returning home from some business abroad, the next afternoon, found both the children in her own chamber. They had taken the large Bible from her desk, and were turning over the leaves. As soon as Mary saw her mother, she left the book, and, running to her, inquired:—

"Dear mother, did the Jews kill Jesus? Georgie said they did, and I would not believe it; so we were trying to find the place."

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"George is right, my dear; but come into the nursery, and I will tell you about it."

The children followed her; Mary sadly repeating, "O how could they!" When seated, Mrs. Ellis began:—

"Perhaps you remember that the Jews were expecting their Messiah before he came; but they thought of him as a great and warlike king. They hoped he would deliver them from the Romans, a powerful nation who had lately ruled over them; and that he would lead them to victory and renown.

"When they found that Jesus, though he said he was their Messiah, did not intend to become their king, nor to fight at all, some of them began to hate him

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for disappointing them. Many of the chief men among the Jews were very wicked; and Jesus often rebuked their crimes, telling them they must repent. This enraged them very much, and they at last went so far as to resolve to put him to death."

"They were not the ones he had cured, were they, mother?"

"No; the common people whom he had taught and healed, loved him, though they did not understand him. These enemies of his were chiefly the rich men of Jerusalem, the priests and learned men. They often tried in vain to get him into their power; the crowd was always round him, and they would have defended him, so the priests dared

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not seize him openly. They at last bribed one of his disciples to betray him. He promised, if they gave him thirty pieces of silver, to lead them to a place where he went much alone, so that they could take him by night.

"Jesus had chosen twelve of his disciples to be always with him, — his nearest friends; they were called Apostles, and yet it was one of these twelve who undertook to betray his Master.

"Jesus knew of it, but he would not escape; he knew God would save him from death if it were best. He met his Apostles one evening, ate his last supper with them, and tried to prepare them for what was before them; speaking such heavenly words! Then he went

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out with them to a lonely garden, where he often went, named Gethsemane. It was night, and a full moon shone down among the olive-trees. Jesus knew he was about to die a dreadful death, and his soul was sad and troubled. When he was sorrowful, he always prayed; so now, leaving his friends, he fell on his face, and prayed God to save him if possible from this bitter cup, — this shame and anguish. Again and again he prayed earnestly; but after every prayer he said, 'Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done!'

"And now he felt strengthened: he was sure that God would be with him and support him; and he knew that his sufferings would all be for the good of

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men, — of all of us, — whom he loved so deeply.

"Just then, a band of armed men came into the garden, led by Judas, the traitor. Jesus went toward them, and calmly allowed them to seize and bind him. His disciples were too much alarmed to know what to do; one of them drew a sword, and, striking a man who was with Judas, cut off his ear. But Jesus bade him put his sword in its sheath; and, asking permission of those who held him to approach the wounded man, he touched his ear, and healed him. It was the last time he cured any sufferer, and that man was his enemy, who had come out to seize him.

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"In confusion and alarm for their own lives, the disciples now fled; and the soldiers led Jesus away bound. I cannot tell you now all that happened that dreadful night; his enemies pretended to give him a trial, and to find some excuse for putting him to death; but as he had never done wrong, they could accuse him of nothing. They insulted and abused him in every way they could; but through it all Jesus stood calm and silent, willing to bear any wrong or pain himself, only pitying the wicked men who were committing such crimes.

"At last his foes obtained a sentence against him, that he should be crucified; and when the morning came, he was led

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away to be put to death You have often seen the shape of the cross, children; here is a small golden cross that I wear. When a man was to be crucified, he was nailed by the hands and feet to two beams of wood fastened across each other in this shape; and upon this cross he hung for hours, until he died of pain. None but the vilest criminals were put to death in this way; for it was thought as shameful as it was painful. Mary, dear! I am sorry that you should hear of anything so horrible; no wonder you cry; but you must understand in some degree what our blessed Redeemer was willing to suffer for us."

"Go on, mamma," sobbed Mary. "Did they nail him to it?"

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"Yes, they did; as if he had been a thief or murderer, — who had all his life been doing only good. While they were doing it, Jesus uttered no complaint; but, lifting his eyes to heaven, he prayed for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

"He was crucified about nine in the morning; and he did not die until three in the afternoon. A great crowd of people had gathered round; for though the priests had taken care to have Jesus tried in the night, when the people generally did not know it, yet, now it was day, the news had spread through the city. Some of the Saviour's friends dared to come and stand weeping by the cross; among them was his mother, Mary.

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"Jesus saw her standing there forlorn and overwhelmed with grief, and by her side one of his most faithful disciples, John. He spoke to them, bidding John be from this time a son to Mary, and take care of her, now that her own son could no longer be with her. For even in the agony he endured, he thought more of others than of himself. Some of his enemies who stood by taunted and mocked him, saying, 'He saved others, but himself he could not save. If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross!'"

"O, why did he not?" cried George.

"Because his death would do more good to men, and prove his boundless love to them more than a miracle could

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do; for this reason he chose to die rather than save himself by his wonderful power.

"After enduring this agony for several hours, he sighed out, 'It is finished!'

"All was over now; his weariness, pain, and labor were ended; he had borne all that could be borne for man. Then he cried, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!' And having said these words, he bowed his head, and died. His friends who stood watching him saw that all was over; his body suffered no longer, but hung peacefully on the cross, while his spirit went up to God.

"For some hours past, the sun had

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been darkened; and when he died, there was an earthquake which rent the rocks, as if the earth trembled at the deed that had been done.

"Dear children, what greater proof could Jesus give us of his love, than willingly to suffer such a death. Let us not be so ungrateful as to forget to love and obey him!"

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CHAPTER X.

THE next day was Sunday. When the children's afternoon lessons were finished, their mother asked them if they had ever heard the day called the Lord's day. Mary never had, but George not only knew that it was called so, but gave the reason.

"Is it not because Jesus rose from the dead on that day?"

"Did Jesus rise from the dead, as Lazarus did?" asked Mary, earnestly. "O I am so glad!"

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"Yes, Mary, he rose from the grave, and met his disciples again."

"Will you tell us all about it, mamma?"

"It was on Friday that our Saviour was put to death. At sunset, some of his friends went sorrowfully to the governor, and asked him if they might take the body of their Master from the cross and bury it. The governor was surprised to hear that Jesus had died so soon; but the soldiers assured him it was true, for one of them had pierced his side with a spear, and found he was really dead. The friends were permitted to take the body; and after carefully wrapping it in spices and white linen, they carried it to a garden belong-

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ing to one of them, and placed it in a tomb or cave hewn out of the rock. Having rolled a great stone against the opening, they went home, bowed down with grief and despair.

"Before the Saviour died, he had told his disciples that he should come to life again; but they did not think of it now as possible; they had seen him raise others from the dead, but now he was himself in the grave, there seemed no hope. His enemies, however, remembered that he had said so, and feared his disciples would take away their Master's body, and pretend that he was risen; so, to prevent it, they placed a guard of soldiers to watch the tomb.

"The disciples passed the time most

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sadly; lamenting for the Friend they had loved, the Teacher who had led them, the Messiah who they hoped would have saved their country. It seemed very strange to them that he should be so cruelly slain, whom God had declared to be his well-beloved Son, who had promised a glorious kingdom to his followers; but he was dead, and all hope was gone.

"But they need not have thus despaired, for while they sat together weeping, on the morning of the third day, Jesus returned to earth. Very early in the morning, in the lonely garden where the Saviour's tomb was, there was a great earthquake; and a glorious angel of God came down from heaven,

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and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre. The guard of soldiers saw the angel, and for fear and amazement they fell almost senseless on the ground; but neither did they nor any man see the Saviour, when by God's power he came living forth from the tomb.

"Before the sun rose, some women came into the garden. They had brought spices to add to those already used in the tomb, and as they came, they asked each other who would help them move the great stone, for it was too heavy for them alone. But when they came to the place, behold! the stone had been rolled away. Much alarmed, they looked into the sepulchre, — but it was empty! They thought at first that the Lord's

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body had been taken away; but directly two beautiful angels stood by them, saying, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? Jesus is not here, he is risen.'

"Then they remembered that he had foretold that he should rise from the dead, and full of wonder and joy, they hastened to tell the other disciples. Others came to the place, and found indeed that the tomb was empty; the grave-clothes were lying folded together, and their Master was not there; but they scarcely could believe he was living again.

"They had left the garden, but one woman remained behind weeping. She was not one who had seen the angels, and all she thought was, that her Mas-

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ter's body had been taken away, perhaps by his enemies; so she wept there alone. Presently she stooped down and looked in again to the tomb; then she saw two angels in white garments, but she did not know they were angels. They asked her why she was weeping; she answered, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' As she spoke, she looked round and saw Jesus himself standing by her."

"O what did she say?"

"Her eyes were so dim with tears she did not know him. She thought he was the gardener, and begged him to tell her where her Master's body had been laid.

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' As soon as he called her by name, she knew him;

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and she fell at his feet, only able to speak the word, 'Master!' Her voice was checked by joy and wonder.

"The evening of that day had come, and the disciples were gathered together, some earnestly relating what they had seen and heard, others doubting if it could be true. Presently Jesus himself stood among them, saying, 'Peace be unto you!'

"But they thought it was a spirit. To convince them that it was truly himself, he showed them the wounds in his hands and feet, until at last they could doubt no more that it was truly their Saviour."

"Oh!" cried Mary, "how happy they must have been!"

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"Yes, how joyful that meeting was, we can hardly imagine. All fear, uncertainty, and grief was gone. God had restored their best friend to them, and now all they thought of was that they should live in his service always.

"For forty days he stayed with them, teaching them many things, and then he led them out to a quiet, lonely hill. He told them that he was about to leave them, and that they must go and preach to all the world what he had taught them. He stretched out his hands and blessed them; and as he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and a cloud hid him from their sight."

"And they never saw him again!" said Mary, with a sigh.

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"Not until their death, Mary. When they had obeyed his last commands, and had done the work he left for them to do, they too went to heaven, and found him there. He had told them that he was going first to prepare a place for them, and that he wished them to live with him for ever."

"Do you think I ever shall see him, mamma?"

Mrs. Ellis drew her children closer to her, and, looking upward, prayed: "O God, grant that we may all be worthy to meet Jesus in heaven! Help us through thine infinite mercy to live as he lived, that, when we are called from this world, we may see him in glory, and be for ever with the Lord!"

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CHAPTER XI.

"MOTHER, have you told us all the stories out of the Bible?" said Mary, rather anxiously, when, after a few evenings, they were all again round the nursery fire.

"O no, my dear; I have told you but a small part of the Bible history. I could find many more; but I shall only tell you one or two more stories at present. You know that George is going away soon with his father to make a visit in New York. When he comes

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home, I hope we shall be able to read the Bible together, and talk about it, a little every night."

"I should like that very much," said both the children at once. "Can you tell us one story to-night, mamma?"

"Yes, I will tell you to-night something about the Apostles after Jesus left them."

"You told us that they obeyed his last words, mother; and they were, bidding them go and preach."

"You are right, George. They went forth to teach more about Christ, and as they were divinely inspired with power and eloquence, they convinced many thousands of people. They taught that Jesus was truly the Messiah, and

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the Saviour of the world; and they explained his words to the people, and a great many joined them, and began themselves to preach."

"But were they not afraid, — afraid of the Jews?"

"The Jews hated them, as they had hated their Master; but they had learned from Jesus not to fear suffering nor death, so long as they could do good. They were beaten, imprisoned, forced sometimes to fly for their lives; but they bore all cheerfully, for Christ's sake. Some even suffered death in his cause.

"There was one of them named Stephen, a man of great power and eloquence, whom some of the Jews hated exceedingly. They paid money to some

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men to accuse him falsely of saying wicked words, and he was brought before a court of the Jews to be tried. As he stood there, on trial for his life, they looked at him, and saw that his face was as the face of an angel. It was beaming with peace and love, — with love to all men, even these cruel enemies of his, and with peace, because he was not afraid to die. He endeavored to defend himself against their false charges; but they grew very angry, and would not let him go on.

"He saw that it was decided to put him to death; and, looking up to heaven, he saw in a vision the heavens opened, and the glory of God, with Jesus Christ standing waiting to receive him. This

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glorious sight filled him with hope and courage. His enemies carried him out of the city to stone him to death, but he knelt down and prayed, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!'

"Then they cast great stones at him until he was dead; while he, looking up to the Saviour he expected in a moment to meet, cried, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' Having said this, he died as quietly as if he had fallen asleep.

"But Stephen's death did not prevent the other disciples from doing their duty; and though there was a still fiercer persecution by the Jews, the Christians never denied their Master. The chief priests at Jerusalem sent men into all the neighboring cities, and if any dis-

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ciples of Jesus were found, they were dragged from their homes and carried to prison."

"Were any others put to death?" asked George.

"Herod, the king of the Jews, wished very much to be popular with them; and seeing how much they hated the Christians, he began to persecute them himself. He seized one of the chief of the Apostles, named James, and put him to death; then, finding that the Jews were much pleased with this, he resolved to take Peter also. Peter and James were two of the Saviour's closest followers, who had been with him nearly all the time he was teaching, and they were now the leaders of the disciples.

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"While the Christians were lamenting for the cruel death of James, they were much alarmed to hear that Peter too had been put in prison. But they knew God could save him from the wicked king, and night and day they prayed to God to give Peter back to them.

"Peter was kept in prison some days; he was chained to two soldiers, one on each side, so that it was impossible for him to make his escape, and there were guards of soldiers placed at the prison gates. It was now the last night he was to live; he knew Herod intended to have him put to death the next day, but he was sleeping quietly in his dark prison, with the soldiers asleep beside him. It did not trouble him that he was to

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die so soon; he knew that God appoints the time of death for every man; he remembered how Jesus had said, 'Whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it'; that is, shall find a more glorious life in heaven.

"But suddenly, as he slept, there was a great light in the prison, and an angel of God stood beside Peter; but the light did not awaken him; so the angel bent down and touched him, saying, 'Arise up quickly!'

"Peter started up; he was so confused by seeing the bright light, and the angel, that he thought he was dreaming. But he found that the chains had fallen off his hands, so that he was free from the two soldiers, who still slept quietly.

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PETER IN PRISON. P. 228.

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The angel bade him bind on his sandals, and prepare to leave the prison, which he did, and then followed his guide, still thinking all this was not real. They passed the two guards of soldiers without being seen, and came to a large iron gate, the outer gate of all, locked and barred with huge bolts. But as they came near it, it opened and swung back without anybody's touching it, so that they passed through safely into the street; then the angel vanished.

"Peter stood bewildered for a moment; but then, recollecting himself, he was aware of what had happened: that God had saved him by a miracle from death. It was about midnight now; all the city was asleep; but in one house

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there were many gathered together, who did not think of sleeping. It was the house of Mary, — a Christian woman; and many of the disciples were there, passing the night in praying for Peter, for they all knew he was to be put to death the next day.

"Peter went directly there, and knocked at the door, for it was fastened. They were obliged to use every caution, for fear Herod's soldiers should find them out, and take others beside Peter to prison; and now, hearing a knock, they did not dare to open directly. A young woman named Rhoda came and listened at the door. Peter spoke, and said it was he; but though she knew his voice, she did not let him in, but ran

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back to the assembly, and said, Peter stood outside. She was so bewildered with joy, she did not know what she did, nor would the others believe her story. Meanwhile, Peter kept on knocking.

"At last they opened the door, and still could scarcely believe he had really escaped, until he made a sign for them to listen, and told them the wonderful story."

"I am glad he escaped," said George. "Herod did not find him again, did he?"

"No; Herod lived but a very short time after this. Peter spent many years in preaching the Gospel, to Jews and to Greeks; and when quite old, he was

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put to a cruel death. Those who died rather than disobey their Master's commands, who were put to death for his sake, were called Martyrs; and they were very numerous. You will find, when you are older, the history of the early Christians a very interesting study. But I have told you enough about them for to-night."

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CHAPTER XII.

"I SHALL tell you to-night, my children, a few incidents from the life of one of the greatest men who ever lived. I described yesterday the trial and death of the good Stephen, — the first martyr.

"Among the Jews who tried him was a young man from a distant city, of very great talents. He had been studying at Jerusalem, and was well acquainted with all that the Jewish priests could teach; but he had never studied the things taught by Jesus and his Apos-

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tles. He knew very little about the Christians, but he thought they were wicked and dangerous men. So he persecuted them fiercely. He was glad to have Stephen put to death; he went round the city hunting out people who were Christians, and sending them to prison, both men and women. Having heard that there were Christians at Damascus, he resolved to go there and find them, so that they might be punished."

"I was studying about Damascus the other day," said George; "it is in Syria, and is a very old and beautiful city."

"Yes, it was then one of the most beautiful places in the East; many of the Jews had settled there, and of late numbers of Christians. So Saul, very

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earnest in this cruel work, set out for Damascus, with some soldiers and companions.

"When he was near the city, suddenly a great and glorious light shone round him, — a light from heaven, which so amazed and confounded him, that he fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice, saying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Saul asked humbly, 'Who art thou, Lord?' The voice replied, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.'"

"Did Saul see Jesus, mother?"

"He saw no visible form, only this glorious light; but he could not doubt who spoke to him. He asked, trembling and amazed, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

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"Jesus bade him go on to Damascus, promising there to make his further will known to him. When Saul rose from the ground, he found that he was blind, so that they had to lead him into the city.

"Here he remained for some days, refusing to eat, but spending his time in prayer that God would reveal his will to him. Then an old disciple came to him, saying, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee, hath sent me.' He laid his hands on Saul's eyes, and he could see again. Then the disciple, whose name was Ananias, taught him of Jesus, and persuaded him to be baptized, and become a Christian."

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"Then," said George, "he did not put the poor Christians in prison any longer?"

"No; he became their leader. Once convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, he resolved to give up everything for him. That he might preach the Gospel, he left his home, and his friends; he travelled over land and sea, suffering more hardships and troubles than we can well imagine. He never thought of his own ease or pleasure, always going wherever his presence would do the most good, however perilous the journey might be; he never thought of gaining wealth or honor, but suffered poverty, sometimes even cold and hunger; working for his bread when he might have

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lived at ease, and enduring shame, insult, and reproach. In almost every city he was met by cruel enemies, who enraged the people against him.

"At one place the crowd stoned him until they thought he was dead, and dragged him out of the city into the fields; but after they had left him, while his friends were standing round him, fearing that he was very much injured, God gave his strength back to him, and restored him, so that he was able to rise up and walk home with them."

"He must have been very unhappy," said Mary, "to be treated so."

"No," answered her mother, "he was never unhappy. He knew he was doing good, and obeying God; so he bore

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everything cheerfully. In one city, some of the people became very angry with Paul and a friend who travelled with him named Silas, and dragged them before the magistrates. They accused them falsely; and the magistrates, instead of trying them fairly, commanded that they should be cruelly beaten, and then put in prison. This was in the evening; and to keep them safe for the night, the jailer put them in an inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

"They could not sleep for the pain of their wounds; and how do you think they passed the night, — in lamenting and complaining?"

"No, indeed!" cried George.

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"They passed it in praying, and singing praises to God, so that all the prisoners heard them. It was always so. Paul even says, 'I take pleasure in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.' He knew that he must suffer such things if he preached the Gospel, and he never murmured at them. At one time he was a prisoner for three or four years, and though he was freed again, yet at last his enemies succeeded in having him put to death.

"After spending his life in Jesus's service, he died like a hero in his cause. Almost his last words left to us are these: 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have fin-

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ished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!'

"George, my son, is not Paul better worth admiring than Cæsar, whom you read of yesterday? I have told you but little of him now; when we have time, we will study his life together."

"O mother!" said George, "I wish I could be like Paul! Was not he a hero?"

"Yes, he was a true, a Christian hero! Though you can never be so great a man as he was, you too can spend your life in Christ's service, in obeying his words and doing good to those for whom he died. Heaven grant that your lives, my children, may be so spent!

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"But now good night. We shall have no more Bible stories at present. But I have told you only a small part of these sacred histories; as long as you live, you will learn more and more of them."

"They have been beautiful stories," said Mary. "You will teach us more out of the Bible when George comes home, will not you, mamma?"

Mrs. Ellis repeated her promise, and the children left her for their beds, their minds still occupied with the true stories they had heard.

THE END.

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